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GNOMICA

GNOMICA :

DETACHED THOUGHTS, SENTENTIOUS,

AXIOMATIC, MORAL AND CRITICAL :

BUT ESPECIALLY

WITH REFERENCE TO POETICAL FACULTIES,

AND HABITS.

BY

SIR EGERTON BRYDGES, BAR.^r,

B. C. de S. etc. etc.

GENEVA,

PRINTED BY W. FICK.

FEB. MDCCCXXIV.


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( 75 copies only. )



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THE AUTHOR,  
ON HIS BOOK,  
ENTITLED GNOMICA.



AND thus I wander on! From day to day  
The lore accumulates; the pondering mind  
Pierces some region new; some cloud expells,  
That sat upon it; casts a wakening ray  
On some neglected spot; or strives to find  
In some forgotten Poet's strains the spells  
Potent to raise his memory from the tomb;  
And round it call fresh flowers once more to bloom:  
Enforces some exploded truth, that long  
Folly and Ignorance have leagued to veil;  
Fearless defends the genuine sons of Song;  
And scorns the minions whom the rabble hail!

Were praise my aim; and were the clamour loud  
Of mimic multitudes the wild desire,  
That foaming in my turgid bosom burn'd;  
Not thus had been mine idle pains bestow'd;  
Not thus been spent th' unprofitable fire,  
That still by those it courted had been spurn'd!  
But I have other aims: within my soul  
Other ambition glowing, scorns controul:  
Within my brain, wild as the Northern lights  
Th' Autumnal evening shews, whose radiance gay  
Quick-glancing, now enraptures, now affrights,  
*Gnomica.*

b)

Visions in mingled shade and sunshine play! —  
Restless they play; and ever as the beams  
Of brightness some returning cloud obscures,  
Sinks my gloom'd heart; my wasted spirits die:  
Then grateful is the toil intense, that seems  
To clear the gathering darkness; and allures  
Hope to my bosom back; and bids me high  
In confidence again re-lift my daring eye.

For what is he, whom groveling on the earth  
Mean Self-abasement holds? His very birth  
He curses, as decreed in evil hour;  
Within his breast all frightful Passions reign;  
Hatred, and Jealousy, and Envy lour;  
Blackness unmingled; and unbalanced Pain.

But I have struggled long; and when the flame  
Died in my bosom; and my waning force  
Scarce thro' my limbs the languid life-spring drew,  
By vigorous effort I have dared to claim  
Revival of my spirit at that source,  
Where the Muse deigns her votaries to renew  
By cups divine of her Castalian dew.

And now I sink no more: — the looks that freeze,  
No more with death-like cold my heart can sieze:  
The blame, the scorn, the glance, the hollow sneer,  
The feeble praise that damns, the cavil sly  
That in half-utter'd whispers meets the ear,  
Comments perverse, the bold artillery  
Of Critic Ignorance that can rely  
On crowds prepared its standard still to join,  
And when it sounds the onset, form the line!  
All fruitless waste their malice: — calm I view  
The gathering mischief in the cauldron brew:  
Inward the bubbling poison turns its fires;  
And burning in its fiendlike source expires!

But am I happy? — In this calm of pride;  
 In this defying confidence, that asks  
 No flattering tongue, and hopes no praise sincere,  
 Is aught of joy? Or will it turn aside  
 The Ministers of Sorrow from their tasks;  
 Or soothe away th' incumbent Phantom, Fear?

Alas, such mighty powers it has not! — Still  
 It has a charm to ward off many an ill! —  
 It dissipates the blight accursed, that comes  
 To nip the tender blossom in the bud;  
 It backward bends the savage blast, that dooms  
 Fruit, foliage, to the ground, in ruin strew'd:  
 It nurses Contemplation in her cell;  
 And bids the poet with enchantment dwell  
 On dreams of fairy form created by his spell.

There is no happiness: — but in the pains  
 Of our existence multiplied degrees  
 Vary the trial, to which Heaven ordains  
 Each mortal's lot by its unscann'd decrees.

Rule to the heart, and culture to the mind;  
 The fortitude that bears with human wrong,  
 And nurses still its fires; th' enduring eye,  
 That looks on Folly's triumph, yet is kind,  
 And keeps unchill'd its energy of song,  
 And cherishes within th' emotion high;  
 The Hope that never dies; the spring of joy,  
 Which nor clouds stain, nor earthquakes can destroy!  
 Virtues like these, dominion over Fate  
 Hold not entire; — but they can yet appall  
 The fiendlike eye of Envy; and when Hate  
 Lifts the dread dart aloft, can bid it fall  
 Without a blow from the recoiling arm;  
 And blast the rage that strove to deal the deathlike harm.  
 But why is glory to the wise denied

(d)

Why flourish in the sun of wordly smiles  
Corruption, Meanness, Avarice, fraudulent Gains;  
All Moral Turpitude; all senseless Pride;  
Each false Pretence; Deception that beguiles  
Worth of the pittance that sad life sustains;  
And Genius of its self-supporting fires?  
Why waits success on heartless Crime's desires?  
While he, whom all of grand, and all of fair,  
And all of tender, ravishes with bliss  
Ineffable, — abandon'd to despair, —  
Is left in tears Affliction's rod to kiss?

«Scorn to the bard,» the flippant censor cries,  
«Scorn, and neglect, and penury, and woe,  
»Who dares with voice malign on Fortune's ways  
»To comment! — Let him spend his nights in sighs,  
»His days in lonely gloom: — but let him go  
»Far from the chearful haunts of Man to raise  
»His chill laments; and leave the light and gay  
»On gilded wings of Pleasure, while they may,  
»Beneath the sunshine of their fate to play!» —

But what *must* happen, there is joy to see  
In its bold colours painted to our view!

We love companions in our misery:

We love the tears that are to Pity due!

There is a grandeur in Adversity,

If still to her resolves heroic true,

Though bending to the storm, she lifts on high

Her head unconquer'd o'er th' assailing crew;

And in defiance bids the foe his blasts renew! —

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But once more cease, my Lyre! thy trembling strings  
For even wildly sounding have no rest:  
From my full heart still breathe th' incessant sighs,



With which each tender chord responsive rings :  
 Then by its weight of thought no more opprest,  
 Bouyant my elastic bosom seems to rise !

Yet who will listen to the self-same tone,  
 That like the lulling wind's unvaried moan,  
 Still murmurs on unbroken ? — Leave the space  
 To harps that can with airier music grace  
 The listening crowd ; and strike with livelier sound  
 The spot where Nymphs and Satyrs beat the ground,  
 Circling with plaudits their fanastic round :  
 While Shout, and Laughter, Sport, and wanton Glee,  
 Boast of the eternal reign of Revelry.

And let them loudly boast ! Be theirs the breast,  
 That has no sympathy for human woe ;  
 And ne'er took Care or Forethought for its guest ;  
 Th' unwrinkled Ease that never sought to know  
 In purer essences ideal joy ! —  
 Be they content ! — but they may find, at last,  
 That the light pleasure, which has no alloy,  
 If without pain, has without rapture past :  
 And thou mayst still, though grave in looks and voice,  
 Sometimes in extacy of heart rejoice ! —

GENEVA, 12.<sup>th</sup> *March*, 1824.







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## PREFATORY LETTER.

—◆◆◆—  
TO \* \* \* \* \*

—◆◆◆—  
MY DEAR \* \* \*

Geneva, 7 Feb. 1824.

THE FOLLOWING DÉTACHED PAPERS were written at the dates respectively affixed to them. This may be an amusement, which you will not blame: but you will ask, « why print them? » — I answer: because they seem to me to contain *truths*, which are not only intrinsically important, but the reverse of trite. What is stale, however just, will not bear repetition: though it may please those weak intellects, which can only comprehend what is familiar to them; and dislike that which puts their faculties of apprehension to the trial.

Nothing differs more than the purposes which different authors propose to themselves by their writings. Some use them as the means of pecuniary profit, or at least of worldly success and exaltation in society and in the business of life. Such men are the slaves of public opinion; and must follow and flatter the passions and prejudices of mankind, instead of going contrary to them, and of endeavouring to correct, or expose them. Others are carried by an irresistible impulse to search for Truth; and place their whole gratification in the intrinsic value of the discovery.

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« But what is the proof of the discovery? Are not errors » as likely to take place here, as in the opinions of the » multitude? » — It may be admitted, that labour may not succeed; cultivation may not produce fruit; talents may err; genius may misapprehend false lights for genuine! But will ignorance therefore judge more accurately than knowledge; passion and interest decide more justly than calm and abstract reflection; and coarse and dull capacities penetrate deeper than native acuteness, sagacity, and force? —

In these days Men born for better purposes have no shame in pampering the appetites of the Multitude. They laugh to themselves, while they cry in secret; « *qui vult decipi, decipiatur!* » — Yet neither the fields of moral philosophy, nor of history, nor of fiction, are exhausted; — nor ever will be exhausted! — Books are multiplied, which only load libraries, and encumber or mislead the mind: while almost all that requires to be entered upon, is shunned as if it were evil and pestilent ground. It is the domination of POPULAR OPINION which has effected this.

L'Abbé BRIZARD in his Eloge on L'ABBÉ DE MABLY, says, « Les Lettres lui offroient un asyle; il se refugia dans leur sein; il préféra l'étude, son cabinet, ses livres, une pauvreté noble et libre à toutes les séductions de la fortune; et aussi-tôt qu'il eut pris son parti, on ne le vit jamais jeter un regard en arrière. N'ayant rien à prétendre ne rien à perdre, ses sentimens étoient à lui: il ne fut point obligé d'enchaîner ses idées aux idées des autres, d'adopter leurs opinions, et de recevoir, pour ainsi dire, ses pensées toutes façonnées de leurs mains: il crut qu'il falloit d'être soi. Il se sépara de la multitude, et marcha presque seul dans l'étroit sentier qu'il s'étoit tracé. Ses principes et son caractère, ses écrits et sa conduite tranchèrent toujours avec le goût dominant, et le ton général de son siècle. » —

Again in the *Notes* it is said, that

« Son désintéressement étoit tel, qu'il ne retira rien de ses ouvrages ; à peine exigeroit-il quelques exemplaires pour les présens d'usages ; bien différent de ces litterateurs qui n'estiment dans le commerce des Muses que le profit que ce commerce leur rapporte. »

In the paths which the public taste favours, there is no difficulty to find authors : — it is in the walks of laborious research and profound thought that the rarity lies ; in which excellence is an obstacle to fame ; and in which there is no encouragement but the internal satisfaction of self-devoted enthusiasm.

I do not recollect an instance of a writer for hire, or of one mainly influenced by lucre, whose productions have continued in repute with posterity. Profit comes from a quick and indiscriminate reception : what is of lasting interest, and depends on the approbation of master minds, is of slow progress. It is, as in the animal and vegetable world : what is of rapid growth, is proportionally short-lived. Milton's *Paradise Lost* required the weight of the authority of the leading talents of successive generations to procure for it the due reception. If the merit of a literary work is to be tried by the number of readers, whom it interests, what work of genius can be put in competition with a NEWSPAPER ? Many publications are calculated to circulate exactly in proportion as they vicious. What is so popular, as personalities, satire, scandal, and libel ?

« But if the Public will not hear, why not let them go their own way without vain exertions to controul them ? » —

Is it certain then, that the exertions are quite vain ? — Are there not a few choice spirits, who may be touched and pleased ? If there be truth, if the production contain any thing of life, some of the seeds are sure to fall in a congenial soil ! But if it do no good, if it be erroneous,



or dull,— so long as it neither flatters any vice, nor propagates any mischief, whom can it harm, unless the author in his pocket? If it be harmless to others, the author at least has been amused, and innocently occupied: — nor, if he has missed the truth, is it possible that he can have avoided to improve and strengthen his mind by the exercise! —

Will any one write but with the hope that what he writes may some day be brought to the test of other men's minds? And who, till he has written, is sure of the clearness and rectitude of his own conceptions?

The importance of the topics, which are discussed in this volume, will be differently estimated by minds and dispositions differently formed. Many of them are questions which will almost daily recur to a certain class of literary devotees; and moral and conscientious minds are always pleased with whatever contributes to allay the restlessness of doubt. Providence, indeed, has permitted a portion of mankind to remain content with a sensual existence, free from the disturbance of inquisitive thoughts, and of anxious fears regarding the ends of our Being, and the purposes of the intellectual capacities with which we are endowed. But there is a sleepless fire, which, if not universally, is *widely* implanted in the human heart; and this fire is ever at work to stimulate us to higher hopes, and to urge us to explore the more shadowy qualities of that part of our nature which allies us to a more spiritual state of existence. — Into these subtle and invisible regions there are many who feel a reluctance, and still more who feel an incapacity, to go. But yet there are enough to satisfy the pride of him who holds the torch to them.

The abstruseness of metaphysical and psychological studies renders the pursuit of them very difficult. The only sane fountain of intelligence is to be sought in strict in-

ternal examination; and the best lights are of course to be had, where the capacities examined are brightest. But persons of lively thought, active sentiment, and strong imagination, have seldom the patience necessary for this strict and laborious scrutiny. The task therefore falls for the most part on those whose resources are less rich, and secrets less worth unveiling. In this field then much remains to be explored; and all that is drawn from this rich and genuine fountain is a treasure gained.

Though a large portion of those who write for the Press, are but mere echoes of echoes, and continue to multiply the same ideas and expressions, still enfeebled and become more imperfect at every remove; and though of these the proof that it is a mere copy is so obvious as to permit no doubt; yet there are other small portions of authors, who tread upon the confines of originality; who sometimes for a moment enter within the boundaries; whose efforts therefore it would be an unjust severity to stifle; who may at least have a chance of being useful; and who by some lucky collision may contribute some sparks to enlighten the world. If it were to be assumed that mankind are already arrived at the *acme* of human intelligence; that all of good and wise which can be thought and said, has been already adequately thought and said, the Human Mind would soon lose its vigour, and by no slow descent fall into torpor and imbecillity. It is impossible to be stationary: if we do not endeavour to be progressive, we shall be retrograde. On many subjects much doubtful speculation must be hazarded before we arrive at the truth: there must be much sifting; for the golden ore will sometimes be unexpectedly found amid dust and rubbish. —

It would be a most censurable severity to suppress every thing which does not unite perfection of genius and

truth: I mean, of that which aspires to be of a general nature: for what is temporary and occasional must always be called for; and requires only novelty of application; not of matter.

He, who tasks himself to develop principles and sentiments, undertakes an arduous and high function; and ought to be treated with candour and favour, if he shews abilities and exertions in any degree commensurate to his ambition. Facts, which form the matter of history, are, when the interest derived from novelty has ceased, only valuable so far as they illustrate principles and sentiments. These last alone form the essence of the fruits of the highest efforts of the human intellect: to these last alone may be ascribed the qualities of ubiquity and eternity. —

The rewards of permanent literature are so distant, so contingent, and so shadowy, that the fires necessary to sustain the pursuit must be of the purest and most extinguishable kind. What touches transient, personal, and narrow interests, gives a strong though quickly-spent impulse; it supplies false strength; and affords factitious aid which for a little while is mistaken for genius.

The mass of Human Beings are born to know only so far as they are taught; to strike out no new lights; to form no new lessons; to clear up nothing which is obscure; to withdraw the veil from nothing which is hidden. Few of them know much of what books or conversation will teach; and none of them know any thing beyond. —

Not only is that, which is new and just, reserved for the discovery of gifted minds; but the most original powers often catch light only by fits amid surrounding darkness. The flashes come and are lost again: and it is only by repeated intensity of view, that what they display is at length clearly distinguished.

But of the Few, who possess the faculties of original

thought, some are overpowered by diffidence to waste the precious inheritance by compiling from their predecessors: while of the Deficient, many are urged by arrogance and vanity to make impotent efforts at thinking for themselves, which end in vapour or absurdity.

Despondence sometimes makes the strong limit their toils to humble undertakings: and the Public is always willing to judge them by their meanest, and not by their best works. It is not believed that he who has employed himself in the timid and unambitious occupation of *Editor*, can produce compositions, — much less inventions, — of his own. And such an one perhaps does very ill in losing his time in labours, which a common dull mechanical attention will execute much better than his excursive talents.

Literature, which was formerly the solace of wisdom in solitude, the refuge of the afflicted, and the balm of the unfortunate, is now become the dirty instrument of the Cunning, working their way in society over the heads of unintriguing merit. The whole cast of opinions inculcated is the cast of men of the world: every thing is estimated by its fitness for success in life; and every thing ridiculed which is not calculated for that end. All observers notice the decided triumph with which an adroit man, daily conversant with life, by the aid of very moderate talents and acquirements takes the lead in company, over one of great abilities and knowledge who has lived much out of the world and alone. It is thus that the mechanical literature, which is in possession of the public ear, turns the weapons in which it deals to its own account. It knows where the laugh is ready; and its first aim is to destroy the respect, which wards off aggression. What is called *good common sense*, is very often nothing more than a mean preference of direct and selfish interests to those noble and ideal ambitions, by which only any thing great

is ever performed. The world does not require to be rendered more acute in what self-interest prompts : it requires only to be encouraged in those rarer faculties and passions, by which the present is sacrificed to the future ; the near to the distant ; and what is before us to that which is absent.

An endeavour is constantly made to divert the public mind from the true tests of intellectual superiority. Yet there is no just opening for difference of opinion on the subject. No one of sound mind who has read and thought, for instance, can doubt what constitutes poetical genius. No one can doubt that its primary quality is an imagination of things noble, pathetic, or beautiful. Dry Reasoning will not do ; abstract moral truths will not do ; ingenious and correct deductions from profound or nice observation will not do : — nay, mere fancy, though vivid, — the lively representation of a particular reality, — is not the power which constitutes the primary quality of a poet. There must be fiction, creation, invention : — the mind must combine anew the materials which the fancy collects from without. But the combination must not be incongruous and monstrous : it must be probable, and according to the laws of nature : and it must also be sublime, or fair, or tender.

Imagination of what is grotesque or revolting or mean is not poetical : because the purpose of poetry is to give refined and virtuous *delight*.

Indiscriminative and blundering minds take Imagination in its unlimited sense to be synonymous with Poetry. But if the above position be true, a poetical imagination requires other qualities than mere invention or fiction. If mere novelty be sufficient, without regard to propriety and verisimilitude, there can never be much difficulty in invention.



But in a late stage of society, when manners are very corrupt, and sentiments take a temperament of factitious fever, the simplicity of truth has lost its charm: what is piquant and stimulative is alone endured; — and if the impulse be violent, no matter how short its duration! —

Works are now written for vendibility alone; and therefore are framed to the humble faculties and acquirements of the Multitude: And Criticism for the same reason, instead of directing its efforts to cheer the labours and extend the influence of Genius and Learning, applies all its ingenuity to confirm the Multitude in the vain conceit of its own right taste.

It is said by the advocates of the liberty, or rather *licence*, of the Press, that the guilt of popular errors must not be attributed to it; because it *follows*, not *leads*, the popular opinion. — This is true: — but then it is equally mischievous in re-acting upon it, and confirming it.

Mercenary writers do not trouble themselves about convictions: they have no fixed opinions: they are the mere conduit-pipes of what springs from others; and transmit without care or enquiry whatever is poured into them.

But what supplies occasion to pause and reflect; what gives hints for doubt, and *data* for enquiry and examination, cannot be useless, unless it be done feebly or ignorantly or perversely.

Too many of mankind, indeed, are utterly indifferent with regard to the intellectual nature of their Being: — they are content with the luxury of the material blessings of their existence: they are affected by no uneasiness to have those doubts resolved, about which they never felt any curiosity: and they have no desire to ascertain the qualities fitted for success in that line of ambition, to which they are totally insensible.

10 Feb. 1824.

I had written thus far, when a work fell, yesterday, into my hands, in which I have found, (almost throughout,) an extraordinary coincidence of opinion with that which I have advanced in this Letter, and endeavoured to enforce in almost every part of this volume. As these opinions are strongly opposed both to the prejudices and the necessary modes of thinking of the generality of readers, I am more anxious for the support of an author of credit on this subject, than for the praise of novelty. It is true that authority cannot turn error into truth; and that the proposition, which is built upon reason, can stand by itself. But there are certain conclusions directly opposed to the stream, on which it is impossible to avoid a little self-distrust. One may suspect some self-deception; some radical misapprehension; some unperceived influence of passion or prejudice. But the concurrence of a man of acknowledged learning and talent, of a different age and nation, and of different habits, satisfactorily removes the fear of the operation of accidental and irrelevant impulses upon one's mind; and is evidence that the source of these conclusions is to be found in general principles, and the common laws of reason.

L'ABBÉ TRUBLET (\*) in *Essais sur Divers Sujets de Littérature et de Morale* (6.<sup>e</sup> Edit. Amsterdam, 1755, 12.<sup>o</sup>) in his Chapter containing *Reflexions sur le Gout, ou l'on examine la Maxime; qu'il faut écrire pour tout le monde!* (vol. II. p. 20) says:

« Il faut écrire pour tout le monde, si l'on veut plaire à tout le monde; mais, pour arriver à ce but, il faut écrire d'une manière moins parfaite, que si l'on n'écrivoit que pour les gens de beaucoup d'esprit. » P. 22.

(\*) Obt. 1770, æt. 74.



P. 26. « Il y a des Ouvrages qui ne sont plus répandus , et plus généralement goûtés que d'autres , que parce qu'ils sont moins estimables , et moins estimés en effet des vrais connoisseurs. Ils ne sont a la portée de tout le monde que parce que leurs Auteurs , peu capables de penser au - delà , n'étoient point eux - mêmes des esprits supérieurs. Les Auteurs ne doivent donc pas toujours *mesurer leur mérite à leur succès*. Ils doivent croire au contraire qu'il y a de grandes beautés *qui ne sont pas d'un goût si général que de moindres , lesquelles , par cela même , sont à la portée d'un plus grand nombre.* » (\*)

« L'Écrivain qui pense beaucoup , et qui fait penser , ne sera jamais l'Écrivain de la multitude. Elle ne sauroit monter jusqu'à lui ; et il ne pourroit descendre jusqu'à elle , qu'en se rabaissant. »

P. 58. « La plupart des Ouvrages que le public estime le plus aujourd'hui , ne sont parvenus que par degrés à cette approbation universelle. Un succès trop brillant dans les commencemens , est un mauvais préjugé pour la suite , et ne prouve souvent que la médiocrité d'un Ouvrage. Des beautés qui sont à la portée de tout le monde , ont bientôt fait leur impression. De grandes beautés sont quelquefois moins frappantes ; et il est rare qu'un Ouvrage du premier mérite obtienne d'abord les suffrages du grand nombre. L'estime du public n'est jamais plus constante , que lorsqu'elle s'est fait attendre quelque tems. »

P. 60. « Quant à ceux qui veulent plaire à la postérité plutôt qu'à leur siècle , qui ambitionnent une gloire durable plutôt qu'un succès passager , la prudence leur dicte d'écrire pour le petit nombre. Le sort d'un ouvrage fait pour la multitude , est tout au plus de demeurer entre les mains de la multitude ; mais il ne passe point dans celles

(\*) « Mr. de la Motte, *Discours sur Inès de Castro.* »

des personnes d'un esprit supérieur. Au - contraire , un Ouvrage fait pour le petit nombre , parvient à l'aide du tems dans les mains de tout le monde. Les gens d'esprit élèvent peu-à-peu les esprits les plus médiocres. On se fait l'honneur d'être de l'avis de ceux qui passent pour avoir le plus de lumière et de discernement. La vanité qui fait d'abord parler comme eux , mène ensuite à penser et à sentir comme eux. Ainsi les esprits se perfectionnant de jour en jour , tel ouvrage trop fort pour le public vivant il y a cent ans , seroit très à la portée du public aujourd'hui. Nous sommes plus éclairés que nos ancêtres , et nos descendans le seront plus que nous. Il pourra donc bien arriver qu'ils feront assez peu de cas de quelques Ouvrages que nous estimons beaucoup ; et qu'au-contreaire ils en estimeront beaucoup quelques autres , auxquels nous ne rendons pas une entière justice. Au reste , il y a en tout tems de bons esprits , qui jugent comme jugera un jour la postérité ; il y a en tout tems , si je puis m'exprimer de la sorte , une postérité vivante. »

Such , among others , is the reasoning of L'ABBÉ TRUBLET on the opinion that *popularity is a test of literary merit.*

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The following seems to me exceedingly well discriminated as to *novelty of thought* , on which there is a memorable opinion of D.<sup>r</sup> Johnson ; (in his Life of Gray.)

P. 112. « Pour combattre ce que personne n'a jamais cru , qu'une pensée neuve est celle *que personne n'a dû avoir* , M.<sup>r</sup> Despreaux se jette dans l'extrémité opposée , lorsqu'il dit , que *c'est au contraire une pensée qui a dû venir à tout le monde*. Il est vrai , que quelquefois une pensée très-brillante n'est au fond qu'une idée commune , revêtue d'un tour ingénieux. Il est vrai encore qu'une pensée neuve paroît quelquefois si naturelle , qu'on est

surpris qu'elle soit neuve , et qu'on s'imagine qu'elle a dû venir à tout le monde. Mais il y a aussi des pensées qui annoncent et qui caractérisent un génie supérieur , des pensées dont on sent bien que tout le monde n'est pas capable ; et ce sont sans doute les plus belles. Les autres nous font plaisir ; celles-ci s'attirent notre admiration ; et tel Auteur a mérité pour un petit nombre de ces pensées , d'être mis au rang des plus grands hommes.

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*On the effects of the occupation of writing* , the following seem to me admirable :

*Vol. iv. p. 4.* « La plupart de ceux qui sont dans l'habitude d'écrire , n'aiment pas à lire ; cela ne les occupe pas assez vivement , et il faut qu'une lecture soit très-piquante pour ne leur paroître pas insipide , en comparaison de la composition. Indépendamment de l'amour propre , on s'amuse bien davantage avec son propre esprit qu'avec celui d'autrui.

« Il vaudroit pourtant mieux faire le contraire , et lire qu'écrire , du moins pour imprimer. Cela est moins vif , mais plus tranquille , et n'a point de suites fâcheuses , soit pour la santé que le travail d'esprit détruit souvent , soit pour la réputation que l'impression expose toujours , et qui , répondit-elle aux vœux de l'Auteur , vaut rarement ce qu'elle coûte. »

*P. 7.* « On compose pour imprimer ; j'imprime pour composer. Si en composant je n'avois pas le but d'impression , mon travail ne seroit pas assez animé pour me sauver de l'ennui. Quel qu'eût été le sort de mes Essais , *etc.* , j'en avois déjà retiré , avant de les publier , un fruit plus précieux que le succès même. Ils m'avoient long-tems occupé sans trop m'appliquer. »

« On peut dire de la composition , comme de la vertu ,

qu'elle est à elle-même sa récompense, par le plaisir qui l'accompagne.»

« Si les gens de Lettres pouvoient se borner à écrire, à la vérité dans le dessein d'imprimer, mais sans l'effectuer jamais, ils seroient peut-être les plus heureux des hommes.»

« Ordinairement il n'y a qu'à perdre pour un homme qui a une certaine réputation d'esprit, à donner quelque chose au public. Il est rare que l'ouvrage réponde à ce qu'on attendoit de l'Auteur; presque toujours on le croyoit capable de mieux. Beaucoup de gens d'esprit, en devenant Auteurs, ont perdu une grande partie de l'estime dont-ils jouissoient parmi leurs amis et leurs connaissances, et qui de-là s'étoit répandue dans le public.»

*P. 11.* « Le tems de l'étude et de la lecture peut être réglé et mesuré, non celui de la composition. Il y a d'heureux momens de génie qui ne reviennent point; il faut donc en profiter, non-seulement quand ils viennent, mais encore, si la santé le permet, tant qu'ils durent.»

« On n'exprime jamais si heureusement sa pensée, du moins on ne l'exprime jamais si vivement, que dans le premier moment qu'elle vient à l'esprit. C'est alors qu'elle plaît davantage. Ensuite on se refroidit pour elle.»

*P. 20.* « Il est bien peu d'Auteurs quelque estimés et quelque modestés qu'ils soient, qui ne pensent encore plus avantageusement de leurs ouvrages, que le Public, et même que leurs partisans les plus zélés. Il ne seroit pas juste d'exiger d'un Auteur méprisé, qu'il pensât de ses ouvrages comme le Public; ce seroit lui commander l'impossible.» —

*P. 23.* « La grande marque d'un bon Ouvrage, c'est qu'on le lise une seconde fois, sinon avec autant de plaisir que la première, du moins avec autant d'estime. Il en est pour lesquels l'estime augmente à chaque lecture, ce sont les excellens.»

« Les Écrivains qui ont plus d'éclat que de solidité , et plus d'esprit que de jugement , perdent beaucoup à être relus. Deux autres sortes d'Écrivains y gagnent , les *pen-seurs* , et ceux qui sans penser autant , écrivent avec justesse et précision. »

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*But what is most to the purpose of this PREFATORY LETTER, I find in the first chapter of vol. I. of TRUBLET that which will make, much better than I can do, the apology I had intended to urge for the matter and manner of the Work now offered to the Public; which I have chosen to make up of DETACHED THOUGHTS.*

TRUBLET begins with a chapter « *sur la manière d'écrire* » par *Pensées Détachées.* »

P. 5. « Quelle consolation pour ceux qui aiment les Lettres , quel secours pour les Auteurs , si les grands hommes qui sont morts , sans avoir composé les ouvrages qu'ils méditoient , avoient jetté sur le papier , comme Mr. *Pascal* , quelques des pensées qu'ils devoient y faire entrer , et surtout ces principes pensées qui devoient être la base de tout l'édifice !

« Souvent ce qu'il y a de meilleur dans un Ouvrage , ce sont ces premières idées , ces pensées qu'on a trouvées en soi sans les chercher , et qui ont été l'occasion de l'entreprendre. » —

P. 6. « Combien le hazard n'amène-t-il pas de pensées , qu'on ne peut plus retrouver au besoin , et dont il ne reste qu'un souvenir confus ! Il y a d'heureux momens dans la vie que ne reviennent point. D'ailleurs la chaleur de la conversation , et les idées des autres , font quelquefois naître des pensées qu'on auroit cherchées inutilement dans le cabinet , et à tête reposée.



« Quand même on se rappelleroit aisement toutes les pensées qu'on a eues sur un sujet, dès qu'on veut le traiter, combien d'autres pensées, qui n'ayant point de rapport à ce qui fait le principal objet des études et des écrits d'un Auteur, sont par-là entièrement perdues pour le public. »

P. 7. « Qu'est-ce qui fait plaisir dans un ouvrage, à un Lecteur homme d'esprit ? C'est ce qui l'éclaire, ce qui le fait penser. Tantôt ce sera quelque principe lumineux ; tantôt une nouvelle preuve d'une vérité ; quelquefois un tour extrêmement heureux pour exprimer une chose, à la vérité assez commune, mais qui n'avoit jamais été aussi heureusement exprimée. Voilà ce qu'un homme d'esprit cherche dans les Livres, et ce qu'il aime à retenir. Mais souvent il ne rencontre dans de gros volumes qu'un petit nombre de traits de cette nature. »

« C'est un grand éloge de dire d'un Livre, qu'il fait penser ; et c'est un grand plaisir que la lecture d'un pareil Livre. Or tels sont surtout les bons Livres de *pensées détachées*. Un Lecteur, homme d'esprit, et de réflexion, devient Auteur, en lisant *Pascal, la Rochefoucauld, la Bruyere*. »

P. 12. « La manière d'écrire par *pensées détachées*, est, à certains égards, d'un grand secours pour la mémoire. Le meilleur moyen de bien retenir ce qu'il y a de plus essentiel dans un Ouvrage d'une certaine étendue, c'est de le réduire en *maximes, en sentences, en plusieurs articles*. »

P. 13. « On quitte et on reprend un Livre de *pensées détachées*, quand on le veut ; c'est une commodité. Mais on n'en coutume pas la lecture tant qu'on le veut ; elle n'attache pas assez ; elle fatigue même. » —

P. 23. Je crains qu'il n'y ait dans cet ouvrage quelques endroits trop abstraits et trop métaphysiques. Je n'annonce

que de la Littérature et de la Morale ; et sur cela le Lecteur ne se prépare pas sans doute à beaucoup d'attention. Je l'avertis néanmoins qu'il trouvera quelquefois une assez long suite de raisonnemens, dont il seroit difficile de bien sentir la liaison et la force, sans quelque application.»

P. 24. « On ne sauroit guères approfondir un sujet, quel qu'il puisse être, chercher les causes des effets les plus communs, et démêler les différences délicates qui sont entre les objets, et un mot philosopher, sans être un peu abstrait. Mais être abstrait et être obscur, c'est la même chose pour ceux qui sont accoutumés à faire plus d'usage de leur imagination que de leur esprit. Un Ouvrage clair pour cette espèce de Lecteurs, c'est celui qui les éblouit, et qui les rémue vivement. Au contraire un Lecteur Philosophe ne trouve souvent que de l'obscurité et de la confusion, où les esprits les plus bornés croyent voir l'évidence la plus lumineuse. » —

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*As to REPETITIONS which, I am well aware, will be one of the first objections made to my own Book, I cite the following passage from Trublet's Avertissement to his vol. III.*

« Je me permets jusqu'aux répétitions, et c'est bien pis que les contradictions. Ces répétitions vient de ce que j'ai beaucoup médité chacune de mes pensées, et de ce que les mêmes se sont présentées à mon esprit en divers tems. Or revenant à ces pensées, ou ces pensées revenant à moi, il m'est venu aussi différens tours pour les exprimer ; et lorsque, peut-être par amour propre, j'ai été embarrassé sur le choix, je les ai tous mis » —

*Vol. II. p 359.* « J'avoue que je répète volontiers une vérité très-utile, parce que je crois cette répétition utile elle-même, surtout quand c'est quelque-une de ces vérités que les préjugés ou les passions contestent encore sinou ouvertement, du moins dans le fond du cœur. Quoique

communes, quoique dites cent fois, elles ne l'ont pas encore été assez souvent, ou assez bien, tandis qu'elles ne sont pas encore généralement crues, on qu'en les croyant on n'agit pas en conséquence »

« Les meilleurs choses qu'on puisse dire aux hommes, sont peut-être déjà écrites; mais on ne les cherche point où elles sont; on ne lit que les Livres *nouveaux*. On a grand tort sans doute, mais enfin on l'a ce tort. » —

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But I must refrain from farther extracts, lest I should be accused of intruding on you the thoughts and expressions of another person, rather than my own: — even while it is to meet the charge of *singularity* of opinions.

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However I must justify my assertions of the *small trust* to be put in POPULAR TASTE by one of the highest of all human authorities.

In that sublime but neglected poem the *Paradise Regained* of MILTON, the Poet at the commencement of B. III. represents our Saviour shewing to Satan the vanity of worldly fame, and the improper means by which it is generally attained: and in that magnificent reply, is this passage:

« Thou neither dost persuade me to seek wealth  
 For empire's sake, nor empire to affect  
 For glory's sake, by all thy argument.  
 For what is glory but the blaze of fame,  
 The people's praise, if always praise unmix'd?  
 A miscellaneous rabble, who extoll  
 Things vulgar, and well weigh'd, scarce worth the praise,  
 They praise, and they admire they know not what,  
 And know not whom, but as one leads the other;



And what delight to be by such extoll'd;  
 To live upon their tongues, and be their talk,  
 Of whom to be dispraised were no small praise,  
 His lot who dares be singularly good?  
 The intelligent among them, and the wise,  
 Are few; and glory scarce of few is raised.»

One of the scourges of modern Literature is Periodical and mercenary Criticism. But I have, since the former part of this Letter was written, found something like an admission of my opinions even in one of the Critical Journals themselves, — (a very able and primary one indeed, —) the *Quarterly Review* for Dec. 1823. N.<sup>o</sup> LVIII.

In an Article on *Pulpit Eloquence*, are the following passages, at p. 304.

« *The spirit of our Times affects what is vague, vast, indefinite; exaggerated passion, vehement emotion, wild flights of imagination; a language of perpetual tropes and figures, regardless of their congruity or relation to the subject, or to each other. The Public Mind is loose and incoherent; its element is restlessness and agitation. Feeling and genius are the catchwords of the day: but the idea of feeling is mere excitation, without regard to any end of purification or improvement: genius, the running riot and creating a multitude of images, beautiful in themselves, but without order, object, or meaning. This is the tone of much of our popular poetry, — dreamy, mystical, with neither plan, nor system; and CRITICISM, the vassal slave of our poetry, has as noble a disdain of being intelligible, as that which it pampers with unceasing adulation.* » —

It is time to lay down my pen; — or I shall make my prefatory Letter as long as my Book.

GENEVA, 10.<sup>th</sup> March, 1824.



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# G N O M I C A.



## C O N T E N T S.

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|          |                                                                             |      |    |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|
|          | PREFATORY LETTER .....                                                      | Page | v  |
| CH. I.   | <i>Author's purpose.</i> .....                                              |      | 1  |
| — II.    | <i>Strong feeling the only source of eloquence.</i>                         |      | 6  |
| — III.   | <i>Early passion for poetry.</i> .....                                      |      | 11 |
| — IV.    | <i>Speculative and practical wisdom. Pitt<br/>and Burke compared.</i> ..... |      | 15 |
| — V.     | <i>Accidents.</i> .....                                                     |      | 20 |
| — VI.    | <i>Learning.</i> .....                                                      |      | 22 |
| — VII.   | <i>Genius.</i> .....                                                        |      | 23 |
| — VIII.  | <i>Abilities.</i> .....                                                     |      | 33 |
| — IX.    | <i>Heart.</i> .....                                                         |      | 35 |
| — X.     | <i>A great mind and great heart.</i> .....                                  |      | 37 |
| — XI.    | <i>Time will destroy false pretensions.</i> .....                           |      | 41 |
| — XII.   | <i>Multiplication of Books.</i> .....                                       |      | 42 |
| — XIII.  | <i>Birth, etc.</i> .....                                                    |      | 43 |
| — XIV.   | <i>Artifice in poetry censured.</i> .....                                   |      | 44 |
| — XV.    | <i>Selfish and Public Concerns.</i> .....                                   |      | 45 |
| — XVI.   | <i>Quiet and Ease.</i> .....                                                |      | 46 |
| — XVII.  | <i>Merit above Birth.</i> .....                                             |      | 46 |
| — XVIII. | <i>Exaggeration. Popular favour.</i> .....                                  |      | 47 |
| — XIX.   | <i>Memory.</i> .....                                                        |      | 51 |
| — XX.    | <i>The Beaten Path.</i> .....                                               |      | 52 |
| — XXI.   | <i>Succession of Authors.</i> .....                                         |      | 55 |
| — XXII.  | <i>Dante, Milton, Tasso, Gray.</i> .....                                    |      | 55 |

|            | <i>Page</i>                                                                                                                               |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CH. XXIII. | <i>Enjoyments are in the mind. . . . .</i> 57                                                                                             |
| — XXIV.    | <i>Improvement of age : extinction of powers by Death . . . . .</i> 59                                                                    |
| — XXV.     | <i>Retirement. . . . .</i> 61                                                                                                             |
| — XXVI.    | <i>Vanity. . . . .</i> 62                                                                                                                 |
| — XXVII.   | <i>The desire of esteem and approbation. . . . .</i> 64                                                                                   |
| — XXVIII.  | <i>Gibbon. . . . .</i> 66                                                                                                                 |
| — XXIX.    | <i>Of the poetical character. . . . .</i> 68                                                                                              |
| — XXX.     | <i>Birth combined with a competent fortune. . . . .</i> 71                                                                                |
| — XXXI.    | <i>Mellowness of age. . . . .</i> id.                                                                                                     |
| — XXXII.   | <i>Frailty of memory. . . . .</i> 75                                                                                                      |
| — XXXIII.  | <i>Wordly cunning. . . . .</i> 76                                                                                                         |
| — XXXIV.   | <i>Vulgar taste. . . . .</i> 78                                                                                                           |
| — XXXV.    | <i>Paucity of the works of English poets. . . . .</i> 80                                                                                  |
| — XXXVI.   | <i>Common-place characters. . . . .</i> 81                                                                                                |
| — XXXVII.  | <i>Knowledge of Moral Truth. . . . .</i> 82                                                                                               |
| — XXXVIII. | <i>Mental preeminence the effect of culture. . . . .</i> 86                                                                               |
| — XXXIX.   | <i>Inequality of destinies. . . . .</i> 88                                                                                                |
| — XL.      | <i>In what compositions an union of all the mental qualities is displayed. . . . .</i> 89                                                 |
| — XLI.     | <i>Knowledge comes too late. . . . .</i> 90                                                                                               |
| — XLII.    | <i>Ubiquity and perpetuity of Genius. . . . .</i> 92                                                                                      |
| — XLIII.   | <i>Regret for the past. Serpentine wisdom. . . . .</i> 93                                                                                 |
| — XLIV.    | <i>Expansion of genius not overcome by adversity, or difficulties. . . . .</i> 95                                                         |
| — XLV.     | <i>Minute and scientific exactness of description of natural scenery, not the most poetical. — Mischief of false theories. . . . .</i> 98 |
| — XLVI.    | <i>Inequality of mental gifts. . . . .</i> 101                                                                                            |
| — XLVII.   | <i>Extrication from localities. . . . .</i> 103                                                                                           |

|             |                                                                                                                        |     |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| CH. XLVIII. | <i>The bent of Nature beyond the domination of accidents. . . . .</i>                                                  | 103 |
| — XLIX.     | <i>Addison, Dryden, Johnson. . . . .</i>                                                                               | 104 |
| — L.        | <i>On the charge that men of genius and high talents want judgment and practical sense. . . . .</i>                    | 105 |
| — LI.       | <i>Active and passive wickedness. . . . .</i>                                                                          | 120 |
| — LII.      | <i>Innocent pleasures. . . . .</i>                                                                                     | 121 |
| — LIII.     | <i>Some fancies delight most in the images of artificial institutions. . . . .</i>                                     | 124 |
| — LIV.      | <i>Imperfect thinking is painful, and requires relief from the light of stronger minds. . . . .</i>                    | 126 |
| — LV.       | <i>« Woes cluster ». . . . .</i>                                                                                       | 128 |
| — LVI.      | <i>The development of Genius often accidental and unexpected. . . . .</i>                                              | 129 |
| — LVII.     | <i>Fame. . . . .</i>                                                                                                   | 131 |
| — LVIII.    | <i>Does nobility in England spring from, or does it involve, brilliant personal merit? . . . . .</i>                   | 133 |
| — LIX.      | <i>The matter of literary composition more important than the workmanship. . . . .</i>                                 | 139 |
| — LX.       | <i>A clear view of our condition. Proper estimate of riches. . . . .</i>                                               | 140 |
| — LXI.      | <i>Taste abundant compared with Genius : — but even Taste not general. . . . .</i>                                     | 143 |
| — LXII.     | <i>The truth of theory not impeached by occasional instances of the erroneous conduct of its promulgators. . . . .</i> | 144 |
| — LXIII.    | <i>Knowledge of what men are, better fitted for success in the world, than of what they ought to be. . . . .</i>       | 147 |
| — LXIV.     | <i>The same observations applied to literature. . . . .</i>                                                            | 149 |

|            | <i>Page</i>                                                                                             |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CH. LXV.   | <i>The guide of leading minds is necessary. . . . .</i> 150                                             |
| — LXVI.    | <i>The Beaten Path the most happy. . .</i> 151                                                          |
| — LXVII.   | <i>Opposition between the speculative and practical skill of Genius. . . . .</i> 153                    |
| — XLVIII.  | <i>Honours of Birth independent of Riches.</i> 158                                                      |
| — LXIX.    | <i>Genius improperly defined to be a general capacity accidentally applied. . . . .</i> 159             |
| — LXX.     | <i>The value of independence. . . . .</i> 162                                                           |
| — LXXI.    | <i>Cunning and Selfishness. . . . .</i> 164                                                             |
| — LXXII.   | <i>Busy Novels. . . . .</i> 165                                                                         |
| — LXXIII.  | <i>In what manner a Poet should write his own Life. . . . .</i> 166                                     |
| — LXXIV.   | <i>Proper requisites of Tales of Fiction.</i> 168                                                       |
| — LXXV.    | <i>Duties of a Biographer. . . . .</i> 173                                                              |
| — LXXVI.   | <i>Distinction between genuine and fictitious enthusiasm. . . . .</i> 174                               |
| — LXXVII.  | <i>Traits and consequences of the enthusiasm of Genius. . . . .</i> 189                                 |
| — LXXVIII. | <i>Distinct sources of the different characters in poetical composition traced. . . . .</i> 184         |
| — LXXIX.   | <i>What are just claims to public notice.</i> 187                                                       |
| — LXXX.    | <i>Dangers of Imagination. . . . .</i> 189                                                              |
| — LXXXI.   | <i>The Vision of Poetry. . . . .</i> 190                                                                |
| — LXXXII.  | <i>Fixed principles of poetical taste in the Soul. . . . .</i> 192                                      |
| — LXXXIII. | <i>What are called the prejudices of a native sagacity, are generally verified by time. . . . .</i> 194 |
| — LXXXIV.  | <i>Successive ductility and firmness of highly-gifted minds. . . . .</i> id.                            |

|             |                                                                                                                           |     |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| CH. LXXXV.  | <i>Opinions of unprincipled worldlings.</i>                                                                               | 195 |
| — LXXXVI.   | <i>Akenside, and Didactic Poetry. . . .</i>                                                                               | 197 |
| — LXXXVII.  | <i>The proper criterions of original thinking. . . . .</i>                                                                | 198 |
| — LXXXVIII. | <i>The voice of the Multitude, not the test of merit . . . . .</i>                                                        | 203 |
| — LXXXIX.   | <i>What constitutes the value of Fancy.</i>                                                                               | 204 |
| — XC.       | <i>The purity of the mind, and the rectitude of motive, determine the merit of the action. . . . .</i>                    | 207 |
| — XCI.      | <i>Belief in the general selfishness of Mankind destroys peace, and brings despondence. . . . .</i>                       | 209 |
| — XCII.     | <i>Familiarity lessens the ugliness of Evil; — of which still the traits are certain, and cannot be mistaken. . . . .</i> | 211 |
| — XCIII.    | <i>Anxiety for the future. . . . .</i>                                                                                    | 213 |
| — XCIV.     | <i>Love of Gain breaks all restraints but the iron bonds of Power. . . . .</i>                                            | 215 |
| — XCV.      | <i>The Neglected Poet; (a poetical fragment.) . . . . .</i>                                                               | 217 |
| — XCVI.     | <i>A Poet must be exalted in his own private feelings and habits. . . . .</i>                                             | 221 |
| — XCVII.    | <i>The aggravated evils of that adversity, which is driven to seek comfort in delusions. . . . .</i>                      | 225 |
| — XCVIII.   | <i>Repetitions of opinions, not always tautologies. . . . .</i>                                                           | 227 |
| — XCIX.     | <i>Gray's Travels. . . . .</i>                                                                                            | 229 |
| — C.        | <i>Pictures of the penetralia of poetical minds, curious and instructive. . . .</i>                                       | 231 |
| — CI.       | <i>Just Invention . . . . .</i>                                                                                           | 235 |



|           | <i>Page</i>                                                                                                          |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CH. CII.  | <i>Tests of originality</i> . . . . . 237                                                                            |
| — CIII.   | <i>Nobility may be made too numerous and<br/>common</i> . . . . . 240                                                |
| — CIV.    | <i>A day without a line; (a Sonnet.)</i> . . . 242                                                                   |
| — CV.     | <i>Speculation and action</i> . . . . . 243                                                                          |
| — CVI.    | <i>TEBALDO; a poetical fragment</i> . . . . . 246                                                                    |
| — CVII.   | <i>The line of worldly success. — Use<br/>of books</i> . . . . . 256                                                 |
| — CVIII.  | <i>Sincerity in composition</i> . . . . . 260                                                                        |
| — CIX.    | <i>Progress of Poetry</i> . . . . . 264                                                                              |
| — CX.     | <i>Poetry, not an Art of words</i> . . . . . 265                                                                     |
| — CXI.    | <i>Analysis of the faculties of poetical ge-<br/>nius</i> . . . . . 267                                              |
| — CXII.   | <i>Pursuits of Genius as virtuous and justi-<br/>fiable, as those of more active life</i> . . 270                    |
| — CXIII.  | <i>Writings of Borrowers useless, cumber-<br/>some, and due to the fire</i> . . . . . 273                            |
| — CXIV.   | <i>Originality</i> . . . . . 275                                                                                     |
| — CXV.    | <i>Critique on two of Gray's Odes</i> . . . . . 280                                                                  |
| — CXVI.   | <i>Metaphysical Poetry</i> . . . . . 283                                                                             |
| — CXVII.  | <i>True nature of Poetry</i> . . . . . 284                                                                           |
| — CXVIII. | <i>A good Fable is of primary necessity to<br/>constitute primary poetry</i> . . . . . 286                           |
| — CXIX.   | <i>Edward Phillips's Opinion of the Fable<br/>proper for an Heroic Poem</i> . . . . . 287                            |
| — CXX.    | <i>The notice of what is great can seldom<br/>be new</i> . . . . . 290                                               |
| — CXXI.   | <i>What is borrowed, need not be posi-<br/>tively new: but must be neither stale,<br/>nor trifling</i> . . . . . 291 |
| — CXXII.  | <i>English Poets, who have written prose</i> . 292                                                                   |
| — CXXIII. | <i>Sonnet, 18 Nov. 1823</i> . . . . . 295                                                                            |
| — CXXIV.  | <i>Beauties of Shakespeare</i> . . . . . id.                                                                         |



|                                                                                                                                                                                            | Page |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| CH. CXXV. <i>Notices of Collins, the Poet</i> . . . . .                                                                                                                                    | 299  |
| — CXXVI. <i>Milton little admired by his cotem-<br/>poraries.</i> . . . . .                                                                                                                | 302  |
| — CXXVII. <i>On the thirtieth day of November,<br/>1823</i> . . . . .                                                                                                                      | 306  |
| — CXXVIII. <i>To Lord Bacon, 24. Aug. 1823.</i> . . . .                                                                                                                                    | 312  |
| — CXXIX. <i>Popularity not indispensable to useful<br/>authorship</i> . . . . .                                                                                                            | 313  |
| — CXXX. <i>Remarks on certain passages in Words-<br/>worth's Prefaces to his Poems, re-<br/>garding Popularity</i> . . . . .                                                               | 314  |
| — CXXXI. <i>Objection to a particular position of<br/>Wordsworth regarding the purpose<br/>of poetry.</i> . . . . .                                                                        |      |
| — CXXXII. <i>Resolution and firmness necessary to<br/>render Genius effective</i> . . . . .                                                                                                | 322  |
| — CXXXIII. <i>Fame is empty: but the intrinsic plea-<br/>sure of the legitimate occupations<br/>by which it is gained, is solid and<br/>durable</i> . . . . .                              | 325  |
| — CXXXIV. <i>On the difference between Classical<br/>Poetry, and Romantic Poetry,<br/>exemplified in Horace's Epode,<br/>« Beatus ille, » and Milton's « Il<br/>Penseroso. »</i> . . . . . | 330  |
| — CXXXV. <i>Conclusion</i> . . . . .                                                                                                                                                       | 335  |

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# G N O M I C A.

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## CHAPTER I.

23 March 1823.

THE desire to leave a memorial of oneself is generally, if not universally, implanted in Human Nature:

«For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey  
This pleasing anxious Being e'er resign'd;  
Left the warm precincts of the genial day,  
Nor cast a longing lingering look behind?» (\*)

Some men spend their lives in action; some in speculation: I have no events to tell, which can interest others: my days have past in solitary musing; in the activity of the mind, — not of the body: and I have nothing but thoughts and sentiments to register.

I will not fear; because he who can only preserve the appearance of ability by management and reserve, must be conscious to himself that he wants ability: and if he feels this con-

(\*) Gray's Elegy.

sciousness, what satisfaction can he derive from a credit given to him by the world for that which he knows he does not merit?

There is one charm in composition, without which all else is vain and lost; — the charm of writing naturally and frankly. (\*) The fear of artificial rules, on which technical critics and authors so much insist, destroys all eloquence.

It is the *experience* of a mind highly gifted and highly cultivated, which an author is anxious should not perish with him. The conclusions of his observation and reason, the permanent sentiments of his heart, at once enlighten our understandings, and excite our sympathies. The faculties of the head, the susceptibilities of the heart, belong not to the arbitrary distinctions of Society; and are, for the most part, independent of fortune, intrigue, or adversity. They were common to Surry and Sackville; and to Rousseau and Burns.

It is useless to know the plausible things a man can say, unless we know the convictions of his bosom. We cannot surrender our confidence, except to him whom we find free from ostentation and disguise.

(\*) Gray also expresses this opinion in his advice to *Nicholls*: and Muller expresses it strongly in his early and eloquent *Letters to Bonstetten*.

Even of the small proportion of authors, who aspire to originality, nine tenths draw from no other fountain than *Memory*. They exert their toils to recollect what will appear most ingenious and most striking; and dress it up in tinsel language for the purpose of obtaining an hollow and meretricious fame.

*Tinnit: inane est.*

We soon turn from such things with disgust; and seek out some other empty novelty, itself to be deserted in endless succession! —

Solid truth, conveyed in clear and forcible expression, can alone attract permanent regard. And we then search it, not in derivative authorities, but in those from whom it sprung. A great deal, which appears obvious when put into words, is often missed by those who seek it in far-fetched subtleties. What have we since, which comes so home to our bosoms, as that which is to be found in BACON'S *Moral Essays*, which were first published before the death of Q. Elizabeth?

The opinions of the multitude fluctuate with every age and fashion: the opinions of Literature and Genius only are consistent and durable. We appeal to them from the blind, arrogant, and cruel caprices, or the selfish or factious misrepresentations, of temporary popularity; from

the insolence of vulgar clamour; or the derision of confident ignorance!

There is nothing more erratic than the freaks of the mere understanding: systems after systems have been built up by sole argumentative processes, to be destroyed again by succeeding discoveries; while the taste and tests of excellence of the productions of the fancy and the heart are always the same, — subject only to the momentary delusions of fashionable folly.

Without fancy, all is particular, narrow, and personal; confined to circumstances, many of them accidental; — yielding no general lesson; and uninteresting beyond self. Fancy, unlimited by time or place; soaring beyond mere matter; and having her treasures and objects always present at her command, can compare and combine as she will: her stores wait her bidding; change their place at her nod; and embody themselves into whatever individual shape she chooses to contemplate.

It cannot be pretended that these recorded authorities of what is wise and true, are not wanting. They are to be found in books; — but they are not to be found in the coarse modes of thinking of practical mankind; which often make the wisdom of Books appear obsolete, unless their lights be renewed, and their flames stirred from the ashes in which they are buried.



It may be said, that in the multitude of Books, and the multitude of Minds which produced them, authority may be found for any absurd opinions! — But to offer an authority for an opinion, merely because it is to be found in Books, is the act of a fool. To give it weight, the hand of acknowledged Genius and Virtue is requisite. —

It is probable that practical men have as little inclination, as they have leisure, for any considerations or enquiries that the calls of each successive business, in which they are engaged, do not impose on them. They think all beyond these, superogatory: — they deem them *airy notions*, in which it is idleness to be occupied. When a man's experience is confined to his own *actions*, it may be said in general that the busiest of Human Beings is but a countless cypher.

What are the active parts of the lives of Dante and Petrarch? Buried in oblivion: or if known, insignificant compared with the actions of innumerable men of common character! — That part, and *only that*, which has ubiquity and immateriality, has made them the heirs of universal fame! —

If the writings of these splendid luminaries did not exist, many historical facts would induce us to believe that the Centuries in which they lived were ages of ferocity and barbarism. But



from these, a reflecting mind will doubt that such ages were as much inferior in refinement and wisdom to ours, as modern assumption delights to suppose and represent them.

Collision of intellect among the living contributes to extensive and deep judgments: — but when the collision embraces all the eminent of departed times, how much more comprehensive must be the comparison and the conflict of materials and faculties!

## CHAPTER II.

24 *March*, 1823.

« Quiconque a une âme énergique, un esprit rempli d'idées claires, d'images vives et justes, parle et écrit bien tout naturellement », MULLER.

I know of but one source of good writing: — to think and feel justly and forcibly! All that has other origin, is hollow and tinsel ornament. But who can think justly and forcibly, who has not vivacity of fancy; any more than feel strongly, who has not susceptibility of heart? They, who study not the substance of the thought, but only its expression, are comparative triflers; like those persons in real life whose whole merit lies in their exterior manners.

Whatever represents things in false colours; to whatever we cannot turn in our sober moments, when sorrow and reflection have made us wise, ought to be rejected as neither a deep nor genuine product of genius. The heart will never approve what is wrong; nor what is artificial, or capricious: the fancy soon tires of all but truth. They who have not within them the delicate mirror which reflects the real forms of things, are only moved by representations of monsters and extravagances. The scenery of this material world; the native grandeur and tenderness, or wildness, of our thoughts and emotions, are sufficient to satisfy the active faculties of the most gifted Beings. There is no uniformity of taste in what is out of the course of Nature: no two ages think alike in such aberrations: change and novelty are the essence of their charm; and therefore no author, who has gained distinction by such means, ever preserves long the notice he has attracted.

No false thoughts are to be found in any of the ancient Classics, who have been handed down to us as the favourites of successive centuries. They never deal in exaggerated images, and impossible combinations: the moral truths they deliver are the truths of all manners, places, and ages; such as pervade our general nature, and regulate the universal principles of human conduct. Those

factitious enthusiasms, which philosophy and calm reason reject, are unknown to them : and all the tenor of their sentiments and reflections conforms itself to that regulated and temperate experience, in which the science of morality is nurtured and ripened.

To soften our affections ; to balance good and evil ; to contrast the innocent delights with the sufferings and misfortunes of life ; not to magnify human frailties, but to pity and forgive them ; especially when set off by redeeming virtues ; — these are not the graces merely, but the substance, of the ingredients necessary to the works which aspire to immortality in the departments of sentiment and fancy.

All sorts of excesses in every thing intellectual or material are followed by satiety and disgust : it is the inevitable property of our nature. The effect of disgust is ineffacible ; at least when it arises from books. We never recur to the work, from which we have experienced this effect. Our greatest poets have been great philosophers ; and many of them excellent writers in prose as well as poetry. They deal in truths, which, though in another form, would afford equal matter for their philosophical works. Thus Gray's poems are moral philosophy, vivified by poetical feeling, and poetical illustration. All their splendor is the native splendor of the sun of genius : — it invi-

gorates; — not exhaults! It expands those tender emotions of the heart, which want nurture, into flowers and fruit. These Poems call up no forced raptures; but compose our thoughts; and warn us against those false hopes and ambitions, which will not endure the calm hour of meditation, and the «still small voice» of conscience.

I doubt if any temptations of popularity would draw a genius of the higher classes into those overwrought fictions and colourings, in which secondary abilities so much indulge. It is a sort of hot-bed temperament, in which the former cannot breathe: like the fresh fragrant flowers of the fields and woods, which put forth their brilliant but chaste colours, and exhale their odours, to the free air; but sicken and die, when shut up in the close heated apartments of Man.

It requires so much knowlege, observation, reflection, reasoning, and judgment, as well as imagination and sensibility; to unite moral truth with all the charms of poetry, that the rarity of these united merits cannot be a matter of just wonder.

It is easy to collect a farrago of gaudy images, outré sentiments, or glittering language: these require only a ready memory, and a continued application of particular labour. They do not demand *even one* of the primary faculties of the mind or heart. And when all their purpose is effected,

they have not added one atom to human knowledge; nor one virtuous emotion to the human bosom.

For what do we live; and whereby can we redeem the frailties, to which poor mortality is subject? — By the good we do to others! — And how can we do more good, than by enlightening the 'moral understanding; and awakening into life the seeds of virtue buried in the bosom of man?

But the tinsel versifier, and the dealer in extravagant fiction, must not aspire to the honour of being among these benefactors! They only tickle the ears, and agitate the dull intellects, of those who are out of the reach of good from literature; but who are open to its abuses and poisons.

Books are now multiplied to engross the misapplied energies, to confirm the errors, and to inflame the passionate views, of the great mass of a people who want the leisure and independence, if not the abilities, to search deep, and judge coolly. Where pretended wisdom is in fashion, the unobtrusive voice of the real Sage is drowned in the clamours of noisy arrogance.

There is however a delight in the pursuit of what it becomes us to know; in the study of our moral nature, and the tendencies of our affections; of the employments which it is good to follow; of the pleasures, which are innocent,



and the discipline which is necessary. — In all these there is an intrinsic gratification, which is its own reward.

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## CHAPTER III.

*Poetry.*

25 March 1823.

I cannot tell, how early I took up the passion for poetry. It could not have been later than my fourteenth year. I can hardly think it to have been accidental: I presume it to have owed its attraction to its coincidence with the warmth and colouring of my mind. I found a more cordial sympathy with the images and sentiments delineated in the pages, and expressed in the language, of poets, than of prose-writers. But long before poets unfolded to me the beauties of nature, its scenery impressed itself poetically on my mind. Almost all my childish amusements were in the open air; in the fields and woods: and the various aspects of morning, noon, and evening were connected with every favourite occupation. I had an eagerness and energy in all my pleasures, which in infancy can scarcely be expected to be under the controul of reason: for, alas! that eagerness and energy have been too little disciplined and moderated even by age!

When I began to pay attention to books, those of which the manner was most glowing, of course most attracted me. I looked for imagery and sentiment; not for cold methodical reasoning; nor for those dry facts, or abstract precepts, that represented nothing of the emotion with which I mixed myself in every concern.

That intensity of pleasure, with which the early senses are moved in those to whom nature has given great susceptibility, is the spring of poetry: — but the gift is dangerous; for it requires the most skilful regulation; and constant and conscientious controul. It is not till it mingles itself with the operations of the understanding, and those moral affections which emanate from the heart, that it becomes beneficial or amiable to others; or unbalanced by exhausture, regret, and disgust, even to self. —

If reason will not make a poet, reason must come in aid, to discriminate, methodise, and direct. But the exact and seasonable application of reason is so difficult, that it almost always begins too early or too late. He who calls the chill breath of reason to suppress the fire before it has got its enduring strength, will probably entirely extinguish it: he who summons it late, will not call in its aid, till the flame is unmanageable.

The temperament of a Poet, however, even when prudently and wisely managed, is not the



temperament of happiness in this coarse world : though *Sarasa* (\*) seems to think it may be made so. Our quick feelings, rendered more acute by refinement, are, even when under the controul of virtue, perpetually exposed to irresistible sorrows and pains. An anxious conscience is never satisfied with itself. Possession never equals our hopes : and, if at any period we are contented with our own lot, we cannot see any of those around us unhappy without sympathy with their sufferings, or perhaps an afflicting suspicion that we might have averted their misery.

This sensitiveness belongs to all great poets : — it has its source in the fountain whence Poetry flows. It is the grand feature of Dante and of Petrarch : it is the very essence of the golden vein of poetry of our own pathetic, moral, and inimitable Gray.

When Poetry is considered as a trifling art, it arises from viewing it as it is exhibited in the compositions of versifiers, or witlings ; or of those who prostitute their gaudy genius to raise extravagant wonders. « *Truth is* » always, « *sufficient to fill the mind,* » even when it seeks to exercise the highest flights of fancy. The business

(\*) See SARASA, *Ars semper Gaudendi*, Jena, 1740, 4.<sup>o</sup>  
Also WOLFF, *Philosophia Moralis*, 1750, 1751, Halle,  
2 vols 4.<sup>o</sup>

of genuine poetry is, not to represent the caprices of an individual imagination, but to embody the forms that visit more or less distinctly every sensitive and moral intellect. This, as every one knows, is Shakespeare's idea of poetry: and thus Gray says,

« Yet oft before his infant eyes would run  
Such forms as glitter in the Muse's rays  
With orient hues unborrow'd of the Sun. »

It is into Poetry that we must look for the happiest and most eloquent illustrations of moral truths; for the sentiments that warm the heart; for the wisdom that animates while it instructs.

He, to whose mind this outward shape of things, this scene of the material world, offers nothing but for analysis and calculation, is deficient in that property which raises us highest in the scale of mortal Beings; -- that which represents reflectively within us, by visionary types, the grandeur and beauty of the Creation.

Yet even this mighty power would be comparatively degraded, were it only a representation of these material forms existing externally. These images of matter become thus associated with the more elevated treasures springing from the internal operations of the Soul. (\*)

(\*) The French Translators in their Notes to *Goëthe's*

## CHAPTER IV.

*Practical Wisdom.*

26 March, 1823.

There is a great desire in the world to make a distinction between *speculative* and *practical* wisdom. There is no foundation for it: — what is

*Hommes Célèbres de France au dix-huitième Siècle, Paris, 1823, 8.º* — have expressed themselves well on what they deem the characteristics of *French* poetry: and which are *certainly* the characteristics of *genuine* poetry.

« Si la poésie consiste comme nous le pensons, non dans *le merveilleuse*, mais dans *les images*, un peuple, qui, par le caractère de son esprit, n'a d'attrait que pour les *réalités*, peut prétendre encore aux couronnes poétiques. Qu'on examine les écrits des grands hommes dont s'honore notre littérature, on verra que dans leurs ouvrages les beautés vraiment *françaises* sont toujours puisées ou dans ces touchantes réalités du cœur, les sentiments et les passions, ou dans ces nobles réalités de l'esprit, les grandes idées de politique, de morale, ou de philosophie; en un mot, dans la peinture fidèle de ce qui nous environne, ou de ce qui nous éprouvons en nous-mêmes. » p. 261.

« La Muse Française, que le *vrai* seul inspire, n'en marche pas moins l'égale de ses sœurs, et n'a point à se plaindre de son partage. » p. 263.

The Editors however add another characteristic of the French, not quite so consistent with true poetry.

« Les Auteurs Allemands ont beaucoup cherché à exciter la terreur par des récits d'apparitions nocturnes. » etc.

« Jamais ce genre ne prendra parmi les Français: en France on est *trop moqueur*, et *trop raisonneur*. » p. 257.

not practically true, cannot be speculatively true. The error may be partly attributed to a confusion of the truth with the *execution* of the truth. They whose opinions and designs are wise, are not always skilful or resolute in putting those opinions and designs into action. The hand that executes best, seldom belongs to him who plans best. And not only unskilfulness of hand, but want of composure and self dominion, may disable one from the personal application of what his understanding dictates.

This disunion between theory and conduct is so very common, that as it has been found that they who have been powerful in speculation, have so very frequently shewn themselves foolish in life, the discredit has spread from the speculator to the speculation: and because profound thinkers have done weak things, it has been supposed that their thoughts, however specious, were not just.

But such inferences are confuted by the whole history of mankind. They are indeed inferences favoured by, if not springing from, the *wishes* of those who entertain them. They gratify the love of degradation, which belongs to the mean hearts of inferior intellects. But is the wisdom of Bacon's *Moral Writings*, is the force and justice of any of his speculative opinions, to be called in question, because his conduct was sometimes more imbecile than that of ordinary men?

But if the fruit of intellect is thus improperly brought into doubt, it is not less observable; that men of practical dexterity generally get credit for talents which do not belong to them: — not indeed because the judgment is wrong, which is supposed to be just; — but because that which is the mere application of what is already prepared, and which is required to be no more, — is assumed to originate from the mind of him who applies it.

Providence has ordained that very humble abilities should be sufficient to direct the mass of those, who carry on the routine of human affairs. They go in the beaten channel, and move with the stream:

There is, indeed, an immense series of gradations in those who are borrowers. Some few rise to the highest rank of secondary talents, from the extended treasures out of which they draw their applications; from the readiness and happiness with which they apply them; and from the vivacity and merit of their expression and manner. Yet if it be believed, as it too often is, that men of these gifts and acquirements, who thus become qualified to make a figure on the theatre of active society, are equally endowed by nature to attain distinction as speculative authors, there exist strong reasons to shew that this belief is not accurate.



The merit of what the understanding supplies in *practical life* does not depend upon its originality, or its universality; but on its adaptation to the occasion. In the best (\*) *books* nothing is temporary, or particular: the merit depends on no extrinsic circumstances, no accidental combinations: all must be essence; and therefore it can place no pretensions on convenience of time or place, nor confer any honour except on the fountain-head.

I can scarcely recollect a single generalisation in all the splendid speeches of M.<sup>r</sup> PITT. He prided himself upon profundity of judgment; upon expedience; upon a prudent and sagacious management of all the circumstances of the moment. It cannot be denied that in these respects he was a great and illustrious Statesman. (\*\*) On the

(\*) It need not be said, that books of compilation are here excluded: these are like shops, where articles of manufacture are placed for the convenience of sale; and which can claim no participation in the ingenuity of the manufacturer.

(\*\*) He had other extraordinary qualities besides these: — a great fortitude and decision of mind; — a command of language, at once lofty, and yet clear and popular: — an eminently lucid arrangement of his ideas; and a sonorous voice. To these was added a disinterested and sublime love of glory; and a total exemption from the entanglement of all petty pursuits and passions.

contrary, the speeches of BURKE, whom nature intended for a literary genius, abound every where in such generalisations: all their matter extends beyond the occasion; and forms the principle, by which all similar subjects may be equally enlightened. It is true, that for the particular purpose this abundant wealth was sometimes cumbersome; it dazzled the understandings which it was intended to instruct; and it exhausted the feeble attention which it was applied to excite. Burke therefore furnished one of the instances of that deficiency of practical prudence, which is sometimes united to consummate speculative wisdom.

It need not therefore be denied that Pitt's talents were altogether better adapted to *execute* the functions of Ministerial Government, than those of Burke. (\*)

To attempt to enter into the radical distinctions in the mental powers of these two very eminent men, may be perilous. I am, however

(\*) *Pitt* entered so early into public life, that he had no leisure to search deeply into the pursuits of literature. But if he had, it does not seem to me that he would have attained the same eminence in literature, as in the conduct of State-Affairs. I think that if originality of thinking, and generalisation, had been among his native gifts, they would have shewn themselves more in his *Speeches*.



strongly persuaded that the difference is to be attributed to Pitt's defect of fancy. Without fancy, a man may be able and wise in his reasonings and judgments on what is actually presented to him; but he has no materials on which he can exercise his mind in speculative matters: The faculty, which peoples solitude, and gives life and action to a contemplative retreat, is wanting. If Pitt had but a sterile fancy, he had still less sentiment. His powers, mighty as they were, were the powers of understanding and memory. These he had in magnificent proportions; and they were so readily at his command, and so severely exercised from childhood, that for that which his understanding offered, his memory always supplied him with perspicuous and adequate language; so that all his conceptions were set off to the best advantage; and he became a master, not only of his own ideas, but of all he heard from others. He habitually profited by the more painful labours of other intellects: he «gathered the honey, which the bees had made for themselves.» (\*)

## CHAPTER V.

### *Accidents.*

Many accidental circumstances concur in bringing forward, or obstructing native endowments,

(\*) Sic vos non vobis mellificatis, apes! —

as well as in giving a bent to the course they pursue. Education, station, health, locality, prosperity or misfortune, society, profession, employment, conduct of friends, and all the varieties of life both active and contemplative, must necessarily operate both in the trains of ideas habitually indulged, and in the colours given to them. But they need not operate to alter the truth of the ideas, which are thus accidentally caused to predominate in an individual: they only operate in directing the choice of them.

It may however be remarked, that nature is still so very predominant, that any or all of these accidents have far less influence than would be supposed. The mental character bestowed at the birth still breaks out under all disadvantages, and in defiance of the pressure of all controuling circumstances. *Burns* is a modern and striking instance of this assertion. It may be true that the very humbleness of his birth augmented rather than depressed the vigour of some of his qualities; but it necessarily impeded the force of others. When the body is wearied and borne down by severe daily labour, and unprovided even with the necessaries of life, how mighty must be the intellectual spirit, which can still throw off the incumbent weight; and interest its heart, and busy its brain, with the airy visions and sentiments of brilliant and tender imagination!

Theoretically, those outward circumstances, which are calculated to produce ease of mind, would seem propitious to the developement of the fruits of genius. Facts appear to teach us a different lesson. *Spenser* could not have enjoyed ease of mind, when he wrote the *Faery Queen*; nor *Milton* when he was composing *Paradise Lost*!

Perhaps the faculties may require to be kept in great commotion, to enable them to attain their due energies,

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## CHAPTER VI.

### *Learning.*

Learning is one of the accidents to Genius, without which it is scarcely possible that its productions can reach any high excellence. It will be said that *Shakespeare* had it not. But if it be admitted that this immortal dramatist had not the *technicalities* of learning, he surely had its *substance*: — he was profoundly versed in the history of mankind; of their characters; and of the events which arose out of those characters: his observations of life must have been gathered from multifarious experience, and innumerable memorials, written and traditional.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Genius.*

Whether a man has acted through life prudently and with worldly wisdom, or with a want of worldly sense; — whether his judgment has been erroneous, or he has suffered his passions to overrule his judgment; — he must be tried, if he be an author, by the truth and merit of what he has written, abstracted from all influence of the course of his conduct and actions. —

The admission of this principle would tend to diminish very considerably the value and interest of an Author's biography. At the same time it is quite impossible, *actually*, so to detach ourselves from all operation of an Author's character and history. There is an irrepressible curiosity, inherent in our natures, regarding those to whom we have resorted either for mental instruction or mental entertainment. This has been amusingly described in the outset of the Spectator. —

But it is much more important to develop the internal movements, and gradual progress, of the mind.

Some have doubted, whether Mankind are not born with equal intellectual capacity; and whether the future difference does not arise from culture, or accidental impulse. It would be a

waste of time to refute seriously an opinion so absurd, and so demonstrably falsified by a common attention to the diversity in the earliest appearances even of half a dozen children.

The minds endowed with mirrors which receive external impressions with clearness and vivacity, and reflect them with exactness; probably give much earlier appearances of brilliance, than those of which the more fervid receptacles amalgamate such impressions instantly with their own stores; and recombine and reconvert them into new shapes. In one case the receptacle is passive: in the other, active. In the latter case, there are more complex operations to perform, in which, perhaps, a temporary confusion may precede distinctness.

But it must be observed, that in calling the mind in the former case *passive*, it is necessary to understand the word with much qualification. It is only comparatively passive. The Fancy does not seem ever to be an *exact mirror*. It always rejects, if it does not add: It may be said, that this is the gradual effect of culture and discipline. But the fancy of poets, which is the strongest fancy, always exercises this choice; — and this is a faculty, which displays itself not less powerfully, — often more powerfully, — in early youth.

Hence it seems that even the purest and



simplest fancy undergoes some intellectual influence and controul. Whether the receptive faculty of impression is ever at the same time strong and indiscriminate, may be questioned. It is probable, that the same feebleness of powers, which causes the impression to be weak, causes it to be without selection or prominence of features.

Another proof that the Fancy is not entirely passive is this: that on two different minds the same objects do not merely impress themselves with different degrees of force, but with a selection of different circumstances; or unequal degrees of prominence of the same circumstances: which must be attributed to a difference in the character of the other powers of the mind operating on the selection. —

It must not; however, be supposed, that, because nature lays the ground-work, and bestows all the sources of intellectual preeminence, therefore nothing depends on cultivation; management, personal exertion, or even accident. There is yet more of native power than philosophers are apt to admit, even in that which seems to involve an high degree of Art. That POPE was a poet of great labour and great technical skill; will be denied by no one: and among his compositions, his *Essay on Criticism* is one in which, from its very essence, these ingredients

are strongly exerted. But upon this poem Johnson justly observes, « *one of the greatest, though of his earliest works, is the « Essay on Criticism,» which, if he had written nothing else, would have placed him among the first critics and the first poets.* » etc. — « *I know not, whether it be pleasing to consider that he produced this piece at twenty, and never afterwards excelled it: — he that delights himself with observing that such powers may be soon attained, cannot but grieve to think that life was ever at a stand.* » (\*)

There are some classes of poetical composition, to which we may suppose the fervour of youth best adapted: but a *didactic* poem on *Criticism* seemed of all others most to require mature knowlege, and long practice in nice and refined thinking.

All the original results of the human mind, which display themselves in the higher departments of literary composition, are, in truth, the fruits of complex powers, and complex exertions. We must not therefore decide one period of life to be more propitious to the production of particular works than another, because it is more propitious to the development of a single faculty. In youth hope is more glowing; ambition is more ardent; and toil is more vigorous.

(\*) *Life of Pope*, II. 357.



Knowledge therefore goes farther ; imagination is more active ; and makes a better use of her stores ; and eloquence effects what study and toil cannot reach.

If Fancy were the mere result of a strong impression on the material organs , it would surely be always more lively in youth. But it cannot be doubted that the intellect and the heart have some concern in this impression : and the intellect continues to ripen at least till middle age , which also renders the emotions of the heart more mellow , if not more deep.

Let the native understanding be as acute as it will, it can seldom collect all the materials necessary for its operations without the lapse of a long course of years. The most valuable knowledge for works of genius , as well as for works of instruction, is *moral* knowledge. But without experience, without long, attentive, and matured observation of life , our moral knowledge must be faint , imperfect , and uncertain.

These considerations fill me with a firm conviction , that even works of pure fancy, of the highest order, cannot be produced but by a concurrence of endowments and acquirements , of which the union is extremely rare.

Every great poet, who has stood the test of ages , has had , in addition to a bright fancy and a powerful invention, a strong and com-

manding reason, and an intuitive sagacity, improved enriched and controuled by a long continued and accurate observation of human life. Mere wild, wanton, undirected, unenlightened imagination is unworthy the sublimer ambition of rational Beings. Yet if it be but imagination, however absurd, extravagant, and monstrous, modern taste and modern judgment seem resolved to pronounce it true poetry, flowing from true genius.

A high degree of uninformed, unregulated, fancy and imagination exists very strongly in madmen, and even in fools.

In « *those flights of imagination which pass the bounds of nature,* » the great poet may well indulge: but they must have that sort of probability, of which the belief is consonant to the unforced excursions of the human mind. The mighty genius « *delights to sport in the wide regions of possibility: reality is a scene too narrow for him.* » But still it must be *possibility*, — or what is *deemed* possibility. It must be in the direction to which the general mind tends, though it may go farther than others: — it must not be in a bye-path, of which the whole novelty and interest lies in the deviation.

It is a consciousness of weakness, a fear of inability to excell where others contend, that seduces into these bye-paths. What engages the

thoughts and feelings of others, it requires superior strength to represent better than others. Novelty of objects has an attraction extraneous to the power of the painter.

But the constant occupation in the pursuit of Truth, under its appearances of magnificence, tenderness, and beauty, requires the acutest talents, and sharpens and refines the noblest. Is it nothing to carry the lamp into the inmost recesses of the temple of the heart, and unveil their secrets to the curious eye? Imagination supplies the light; and identifying herself with the keys which open every avenue, moves as a spirit through all the labyrinths, which encircle the inmost shrine where the fountain of the soul springs up! —

These are inventions, these are discoveries, far grander than building baby-houses of glittering toys, and combining heterogenous materials into surprising monsters.

There is, in following out such studies, a constant exercise of all the faculties of the mind. Learning observation, memory, judgment are all in incessant request. A profound skill in moral knowledge cannot be acquired without a wide experience, long and deep researches into history, an accurate perception, and a nice comparison. To these must be added a taste for the grand and the beautiful; a clear fancy; and a sensitive

heart. What grand effort in poetry can be made without these? Without this knowledge, how can characters be invented with due regard to the probabilities of human passion and human reason? Johnson properly says, «*the great business of the human mind is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong: the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions.*» — «*Those authors therefore are to be read, that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation: and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.*» (\*) But unless the poets be of the quality I describe, how vainly would such matter be sought among their pages? — Is it to be found in that which is furnished by the crazy invention of impossible Beings? by exhibiting purity and refinement in untutored barbarism; and tenderness, generosity, grandeur, and wisdom in ferocity, sensuality, and wickedness?

That, which fills the imagination merely with wonder, let it be as splendid as it will, conveys but a short-lived pleasure. It is necessary to satisfy the understanding, and to gain the fiat of the

(\*) Life of Milton.

heart, as well as to strike the imagination. That, to which we cannot satisfactorily and profitably recur at moments of sober reflection, when vanity has ceased, and the trying realities of life have taught us to be sage, is but a showy and surfeiting bauble. It is from wisdom and truth that we seek for consolation: delusions nauseate: we want no exaggerations of false passion, and false brilliance: our own heated perceptions have already magnified objects too much: we want the charm of the Sage, that dissipates these unreal rays: not the dangerous spell of the evil Magician, that augments them! —

False beauties are always changing; — change is their essence: Truth is constant and eternal. Time tries it; and brings it out: as fire separates the genuine ore from the dross. The most brilliant passages of Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Dryden, Pope, and Gray, are as true as they are brilliant. They are most of them as applicable to life, as they are to the visionary and abstract pleasures of the mind.

All apologies for deviations in poetry from that which sound wisdom can approve, drawn from the plea that they are but a poet's dream, or a poet's fiction, are the hollow apologies of impertinent vulgarity and ignorance. Truth is as much the business of the poet, as of the philosopher, though he conveys it in a different



dress, and seeks to produce conviction by a different path.

It is admitted, that the human imagination has a perpetual tendency to aberrations; to distempered ideas; to distorted or exaggerated lights: but it is not the business of the real poet to foster and perpetuate these: — on the contrary, he ought to give all his efforts to correct and supersede them. He may win a short popularity by indulging and encouraging them, because we delight to have a seeming justification of our faults: but his gain is the wages of meanness and corruption; it is at the expence of his integrity and virtue.

If the mere power of representing strongly an image strongly impressed on the mind be sufficient to entitle one to the merit of a great poet; without regard to the character of the image represented, it must be owned that a powerful picture of any distempered or erroneons vision or passion, which has dominion over the mind, is first-rate poetry.

The understanding corrects the wrong impressions of the Senses; and controuls the overwrought colourings of Passion. Without the superintendance of reason, Imagination is like a ship at the mercy of the winds and waves, without a pilot or a rudder. Beattie says of his *Hermit*, that  
«*He thought as a sage; but he felt as a man!*»



It is in the blended result of these two operations of the mind, that perfect poetry consists.

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## CHAPTER VIII:

### *Abilities.*

The faculty of clearly conceiving the thoughts of others; of preserving them in the memory; and of redelivering them with perspicuity, and even elegance, is bestowed by Providence not sparingly. To this degree of intellectual endowment is applied the term; *abilities*; in contradistinction to *genius*; which is the susceptibility of original and powerful impression; and when it is of the highest degree; has the additional faculty of new combination.

The fame, which is acquired by such *abilities* is seldom brilliant or lasting: their use depends on readiness of *applying* what is the production of others. The merit therefore ceases with the occasion. Whenever another application becomes necessary, resort will again be had to the original; and not to the copy.

Nineteen twentieths at least of all literary productions are of this secondary nature: They soon therefore sink into oblivion, as they are super-

ceded by those which new occasions call forth. Temporary historians, politicians, moralists, poets, novelists, wits, flutter into life under the factitious heat of the rays of fashion, and die again like butterflies.

But even of this large portion who want originality, a small part only possess the power of accurately conceiving, and justly applying. The majority have only a capacious memory encumbered with stores of confused thoughts, which for the want of discrimination and judgment rather mislead than benefit. —

The greater number of our modern compilations of miscellaneous literature afford only an idle stir of memory; without offering any food for the understanding; the heart, or the fancy. Thousands of dry, fruitless, minutiae are heaped together; and we are called on to fill our heads with trifles which pall the attention, and withdraw us from that love of books, of which to diminish the interest is to rob us of one of the most virtuous charms of life.

Whatever confounds in the public opinion genius and solid learning with such empty pretensions, is a deep and extensive evil. The esteem and respect of authorship has long been declining; and is now almost extinct. The meanest capacity, and the most vulgar acquirements, may suffice to make a mechanical author: and in these

days thousands of mechanical authors, no better endowed, start forth, and make a bustle in the world. When such men are seen in the characters of authors, their want of consequence is contagious, and spreads to literature itself.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### *The Heart.*

It is not sufficient for just eminence that authors should have the power of thinking ingeniously: they ought also to think both rightly, and nobly. That light conviction, which «*plays round the head*» but does not touch the heart, is not to be trusted. It sits too superficially; and is sometimes transient; and often easily suspended.

It seems indeed as if the mere reason is not adequately operative of itself; and that a conviction, before it be deeply fixed, requires the approval of that intuitive sense which appears to be intimately connected with the heart. Whether it be in original thought, or in that which is derivative, the *fiat* of the heart alone gives that sincerity, which is strong enough to impel to action.

Mere ingenuity: — nay, mere *splendor*, of genius wandering in wrong paths, never yet left

behind it fruits, which retained the esteem of posterity.

The internal faculty of the heart, which is *active* in some, and only a passive susceptibility in others, is a gift of nature. It presides over the *judgment*; and aids or opposes it according to the bent of its operations.

Nothing is of genuine and perfect sublimity or grandeur, which has not something in it of pathos: and nothing can have proper and real pathos, which is false. Above all, it must have truth, if it regards morals! —

And here it may be asked, «what is moral truth?» Religion, natural as well as revealed, tells it us: a regard to the happiness of our fellow-beings tells it us: a regard to our own happiness tells it us: a regard to the dignity of our nature tells it us: the sympathies or aversions of our hearts tell it us.

Those impressions, which in our moments of sober reflection, when our evil passions are passed away, do not retain the same character, and do not receive the consentaneous emotions of the bosom, are not morally true.

It may be safely observed, that no writer, whose thoughts and sentiments the experience of mankind has found to be incorrect, — much less which the experience of mankind has disapproved — has retained his seat in the temple of

Fame. All the moral matter, which forms the basis of the works of Homer, Virgil, Cicero, etc. has been proved to be the deepest and most accurate, at which mere human wisdom could arrive.

These is a factitious or momentary enthusiasm, under which those who labour, may feel gratified by exaggerated representations consonant to their own prevailing temperament: but a more general and enlarged taste dissipates or rejects these partial colourings. Calm musing and sedate consideration break the clouds of error, and strip delusive coruscations of their brilliance. That, which vanishes before prolonged reflection, is of little value.

## CHAPTER X.

*A great mind, and great heart.*

1 Nov. 1822.

All is vain and worthless, but a great mind, and a great heart. — But what is a great mind and a great heart? It will be proper to examine, explain, illustrate, and discuss, before we attempt to define! But we may assert, that a great mind and a great heart are formed of a compound of the highest sorts of capacity, enriched by feeling, and directed by virtue. —



Solitude is the field of contemplation; and, consequently, of the employment of our noblest faculties. Events therefore, and the active parts of the life of a man of genius, if any part of it has been active, are of comparative insignificance. Yet the Public likes incident better than speculation; and has little taste for observation and reflection, except when it is attached to action. It is difficult therefore to make any biography interesting to the common reader, which is not stored with incident.

A large part of what passes in society is mere insipid, useless, momentary ceremony: it springs out of a confused chaos of ideas; and, as it was imperfect in its birth, it ends in abortion.

A great mind is controuled in society by the coarseness and dulness of vulgar characters. In solitude it has

*« Ample room, and verge enough,  
The characters of » soul « to trace. »*

At the same time an occasional mixture with the bustle and conflicts of human Beings is useful and instructive.

There is no birth, or rank, or wealth, that can supply those primary qualities of the mind, or heart, which give the aristocracy of Nature. Unfortunately the possessors of this high premi-



nence do not commonly know its value, till too late in life. They do not

*« Know their own worth; and reverence the lyre. »*

The consequence is, that they do not steadily follow their own propensities with a dignified calmness and satisfaction.

Without the advantages of fortune, or at least, independence, it is indeed not very practicable to pursue those abstracted and unmercenary occupations, which supply no means of subsistence: but for which the Public Patronage ought, (though it seldom performs this duty,) to furnish rewards.

The lots of our existence are strangely, and mysteriously cast. To our imperfect perceptions they often appear contradictory and perverse. It is not easy to support dignity of mind under poverty and meanness of condition. Mean thoughts and sentiments are too often inherited from mean parentage. But not always: the genuine and lofty spirit surmounts them; — witness Burns!

To embody the fine visions of the mind; and to render them capable of being communicated and circulated: what is this but to add to the highest species of human riches? But taste will not do this: memory will not do it: powers of

reasoning will not do it! — It requires not only quick perception, and deep sensibility; but vivid fancy, and plastic imagination.

It is true, that it may be decreed that many should pass through this state of Being in a course of mere negative innocence; doing neither good, nor harm. We are ignorant of the inscrutable purposes, for which Providence may so design it. Such persons may enjoy life, though they may not have the ability to define, or the power to communicate, their pleasures. External objects may fill them with admiration, or gentle thrillings, in proportion as they are grand or beautiful. But such pleasures die as quick as they come; leaving no trace behind them, after their departure.

The love of distinction for what is intrinsically excellent, is a generous and lofty ambition; a desire which all great minds feel. To pass through life in obscurity is a fate, to which they cannot reconcile themselves: but obscurity is not the necessary effect of solitude: they can teach or delight from the shades: their voice can be heard from the deepest woods.



## CHAPTER XI.

*Time will destroy false pretensions.*

26 Dec. 1822.

Concealment and disguise would be vain, were they desired. All false pretensions must cease by the calm and unprejudiced scrutiny of Time. Ability and inclination will be found to discriminate, and weigh with truth and justice, all the separate or combined qualities which a literary production exhibits; or which an author gives proof of having possessed.

Art may often for a moment cover over defects and weaknesses with factitious and plausible lights: but these will disappear before cool and attentive examination. Thus secondary authors often conceal penury or vulgarity of thought and of knowledge by the artifices of style. The eye and the ear may be caught: but the understanding will soon correct the delusion.

That which depends, not upon the thing said, but upon the skill in saying it, is of very transient interest. —



## CHAPTER XII.

*Multiplication of Books.*

26 Dec. 1822.

If there be no end of multiplying books which are but a repetition of what has been already put into print, that which comes from the pen of him who not only thinks for himself, but thinks vigorously and justly, may yet be useful, meritorious, and even necessary.

Those faculties, which enable us to think rightly and to feel rightly, and adequately to communicate our thoughts and sentiments, on questions which have not hitherto been duly decided and explained, are not very common. Or they are so seldom brought into fruit by proper culture, that the rarity of their occurrence must add much to their value, whenever they are worked to maturity.

That which is taken at second hand, has scarcely more than a technical use. *Passive* knowledge may be beneficial to the possessor; that which is *active* is alone important to the Public. —

It is not true, that all that can be wisely said, has been said before: — even a new mode of saying it may perhaps elicit a new truth. —

But copies can never be equal to what is original: they have always the inferiority of comparative faintness. —

## CHAPTER XIII.

*Birth, etc.*

25 Feb. 1823.

The Public for the most part considers birth and titles as trifles unbecoming the serious attention of a sound and enlarged mind. They seem to me to have their value: though, where a value is put upon them, it is seldom placed upon its true foundation. I do not think that they can make amends for deficiencies, moral or mental: on the contrary, they seem to me to create an additional demand for them. They ought to act both as incitements and ornaments: first, to generate a noble emulation; and afterwards to crown that, to which they have given origin.

He, who possesses this distinction, is less tempted to sacrifice elevated and unmercenary occupations to the pursuit of wealth.

I presume therefore that the regard to splendid birth, which has been entertained by all nations in all ages, is built upon deep and accurate moral wisdom.

A due consciousness of illustrious descent ought to be a perpetual talisman, and a perpetual impulse. It ought at once to be a spur to rival the past, and a memento of responsibility for the conduct of succeeding generations: it ought to



bring with it the constant recollection that the possessor's posterity may thus inherit the disposition to pursue glory rather than selfish gains! —

It may be said, that this possession (or pretension or accident, if the objector chooses so to call it,) often fails to produce these good effects. Are we then to argue from the abuse of a gift? Is not wealth also as often abused? It may be urged that the wealth which a spendthrift throws away, another receives. But does it not often corrupt the receiver, as well as the spender?

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### *Artifice in Poetry censured.*

23 Dec. 1822.

Wherever there is an attempt to supply the want of native fancy or native sentiment by *Art*, the effect is sure to shew itself in a straining after *false beauties*! —

Art therefore seems always mistaken in the proper aim; in the proper objects of resemblance.

Imagination is not sufficient, unless the imagination be just: unless it have poetical probability. --

Almost all false poetry is a mistake of the proper duties and proper objects of imagination.

Genius may not succeed *perfectly* without the



addition of Art : but Art can do *nothing* without Genius.

What is the cause of that lameness of expression, as well as crudeness of thought, into which so many of the old minor poets fall, after having kept themselves on the wing for a little while? — It is false fire.

There was a good deal of affectation in the sonnet-writers of Q. Elizabeth's reign — such as *Constable, Barnes, Gabriel Harvey, Watson*, etc. — Nor were the pastoral songs of that æra, except very rarely, without a good deal of quaintness.

The French school of poetry, which succeeded the Italian, approached more to the poetry of the understanding and reason.

The Poets of Ch. 2's time wanted both fancy and sentiment. — But most of them had a lively and acute intellect.

There may be fancy without sentiment : — but seldom sentiment without fancy. The fancy must first present the image, before occasion is given for the sentiment.

## CHAPTER XV.

*Selfish and public concerns.*

31 Oct. 1822.

Between too much and too little anxiety for private and selfish concerns, the line of demarcation is exceedingly difficult to be traced.

Then comes the question, who is *of use* beyond himself and those immediately connected with him?

Are authors of use? And what sorts of authors?

Dealers in Imagery; Sentiment; Observation; Reflection; Reasoning! —

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### *Quiet and Ease.*

What is there in life worth having, but quiet and ease of mind?

Nature has implanted in us the desire to be spoken and thought well of. —

If we can prove that our occupations have been innocent and virtuous; — still more, if useful to the Public, — shall we silently bear malignant misrepresentations of our conduct and habits?

To exhibit rectitude and elevation of thought, is a merit which ought to conciliate affection and esteem. True views of life lead to satisfaction, and to virtue,

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### *Merit above Birth.*

What can a man say of himself, but that he has led a life, which he would not lead again, could life be renewed? — Experience teaches him his errors too late.

All vanity and disguise are mean and unavailing. A man must stand or fall by his own real and intrinsic strength or weakness.

The power of thinking and feeling forcibly and justly, and of communicating those impressions to others, is a praiseworthy distinction.

Why should a man rely on birth? Milton and Gray were sons of Scriveners; Collins, — of a Hatter; Akenside and Kirke White — of Butchers; — Chatterton, — of a Parish Clerk; — Shenstone, — of a farmer; — Beattie, and Burns, — of peasants; — Pope, — of a linen-drapeer — Prior, — of a tavern-keeper! —

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*Exaggeration. Popular favour.*

28 Jan. 1823.

The habit of exaggeration adopted by those who write for the mob, and for temporary purposes, is very disgusting, and very mischievous.

The «*still small voice*» of reason, wisdom, or taste, is never heard amid these clamours; which are, (to use Burke's beautiful simile,) the noise of the grasshopper filling the air with its incessant chirps, while the Ox is chewing the cud *in silence*, under the shade of the British oak.

All is calculated to excite transient attention on topics, on which the passions of the multitude are alive: — which topics are in a little while as much forgot, as if they had never been raised. — If we then turn back to them, the very people, who for the moment were most heated by them, wonder most how they could ever have found any interest in them. This is an incontrovertible proof, that all their claims to notice were factitious. —

How very few of the Articles in the<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, which at the moment of publication caught every reader, possess any longer the smallest zest! — If they had intrinsic value; if they were written with sober and solid wisdom, this could hardly be the case. It is hence to be inferred, that there is nothing original, or nothing just, in the *fonde* of them: and that all their claim to attention lay in the application of the matter to some ephemeral topic. —

They are seldom the originators of abstract truths; of novelty in generalization; of a new tint of the mind arrested, and cloathed in language; of a new, striking, elegant, and just, form of words:

«*What oft was thought; but ne'er so well express'd,*»  
( as Pope says. )

All is catching, but hollow: — plausible at

first, but not capable of enduring the *assay*. It is «*finer work*»: and when it is pierced, you soon get beyond what is solid and genuine.

It is nowhere sincere: but all for momentary effect. It has the ingenuity of the head: but has not been sanctioned by the approval of the heart.

The results of a calm, philosophical, and economised judgment alone can *continue always* to be *standards* of opinion.

Ask one of these Reviewers in private what he thinks of a large portion of the works, which he has lauded to the skies: he will shake his head; and cry «poor stuff! — mediocrity! — absurdity! — corrupt tinsel!» etc. — but he will add, that adventitious circumstances rendered it an object of paramount policy to impress to the utmost the credit of the author, or of his work, on the public mind!

But just in proportion as these adventitious circumstances have lifted an author and his works into temporary distinction, they are both left to their own worthlessness, as soon as these causes have ceased.

Those versatile talents most able to take advantage of occasion, are only fitted for occasion: they must swim with the stream; and fly with the wind: they can make no way by themselves. They can give no new impulses to the mind: nor be resorted to, as the fountains of new opinions;



of which the justice causes the future admission to be the consequence of the discovery.

Nothing is of much value, which does not continue to please, after a repetition of perusals.

All the talent, understanding, art, discipline, labour, upon earth, will not supply the original want of fancy; and want of that internal sensibility which springs from the heart. It may judge with perfect rectitude of that which is the production of these endowments: but it cannot originate such productions. The origination must issue from the picture which the fancy presents, and the emotion raised by the picture so presented. It is by this that the poet is enabled

*« To snatch a grace beyond the reach of Art. »*

The persons who think and feel for themselves, are more rare than even the most severe suppose.

Opinions on important subjects are, for the most part, made up of so many complexities, and nice particles of ingredients, so subtle as to escape the power of language to point out, — that weight of authority will go, and ought to go, a great way in procuring assent.

The habit of writing as an advocate, and not as a Judge, is destructive to the soundness and consistency of opinion.

If often happens that men, who are not skilful



and clear arguers, come by native intuition and sagacity to just and solid conclusions : — and in this way men of poetical genius arrive, by the aid of the lights of imagination and feeling, at the conviction of the deepest truths.

An adroit logician often abuses his faculty ; and misleads by the most wilful and vile sophistries.

Unsought touches proceed from Genius, which the Artist vainly attempts to emulate.

Enthusiasm and Sincerity are indispensable attendants of Genius.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### *Memory.*

25 Dec. 1822.

MEMORY is not an original power of the mind : it is the duration of *any* act or impression, of *any* power of the mind : — whether it be an impression of fancy, or imagination, or sentiment, or reason ; or mere conception or intelligence.

If the merit of a work of fancy is to consist in the exactness of the representation, not only must the receptacle of the original impression have been clear and brilliant ; but the memory of it must have endured in full force at the moment employed in creating the reflection of it.

But a brilliant fancy generally unites to itself something of the faculty of imagination; and this last faculty supplies, perhaps heightens, whatever is lost by the memory.

How Fancy and Memory can be confounded as the same powers, is to me very astonishing!

Each, they say, is the revival of something in its absence. But fancy is not the act of revival: fancy is one of the things revived. Fancy has no reference to time: fancy is not a substitute: it is an original.

When we say that fools have long memories; the memory is only of the impressions of such trifles as they are capable of receiving.

## CHAPTER XX.

### *The Beaten Path.*

10 Jan. 1821.

In working up one's way thro' the difficulties of Life, the effects of long and patient perseverance are beyond the power of prospective estimate to appreciate. I make this reflection, after a night of anxious thought, and of feverish and tormenting perplexity of internal discussion.

But it is not possible to calculate precisely and duly the effects even of the *past* perseverance, without laborious and strict examination, and without full and comprehensive data before one!

I have puzzled myself with *conjectures*, till every nerve became distracted: and after all, only to end in false hope, or false fear!

In the arrogance of flighty and soaring expectation, a young man of active and ardent intellect enters the forest of Life in the confidence of being able to explore and penetrate paths of his own, without regarding the beaten track, or resting on the labours and experience of others. He is sure to be a victim both to self-delusion; and to the artifices of those who are interested in leading him astray.

Him who keeps in the beaten path, no one attempts to disturb. He goes on safely without talent, or skill, or knowlege, or vigilance. He might be misled by conjectures, and probabilities, and arguments, and assertions: The *beaten* track is a plain fact, visible to the eye; which no one can mistake.

Another source of error in the calculation of a Theorist, is the assumption that Mankind are governed by reason; and that that, of which it can be proved that it *ought to be*, will be! —

It is not so! Mankind are not governed by reason! It is all interest, and prejudice; and rivalry, and conflict; and intrigue!

Optimists will say, that the greater liability to failure, to which talents are exposed, the more it is as it should be! That it brings those, to whom nature

has been niggardly in intellectual gifts, upon a level with their superiors!

I know that it is impossible to convince a large portion of the world, that a person can really possess great and sound abilities, unless he has proved himself *practically prudent* and *skilful*.

But I have endeavoured to shew, that the best chance of going what the world calls *right*, is «*to follow the leader.*» — It will not be denied, that even an idiot can do this!

«Of what avail then,» it may be said, «are abilities, if they will not enable a man to direct himself right?» It might as well be asked (to apply a ludicrous illustration) of what use is a taylor who makes a suit of cloathes well for another person, if he makes a suit for *himself* which fits him badly?

As we descend into the vale of Life, we are apt more to value those gratifications which are called *substantial*; and less, those, which are called *imaginary*. This is strange! — as we approach nearer to the world of *Spirits*, we become more enamoured of the *Material*! Riches then begin to take a new estimation in our eyes: and we are all for solid enjoyment! But wealth also is found to be empty and pleasureless with many who have possessed it from youth to age: they would willingly barter much of it for what most of those, who possess it, find «a bubble»

when attained : for fame, rank, and distinction! — while they who thus find them «a bubble,» think themselves ill-repaid for the sacrifices they have made to acquire them. —

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### *Succession of Authors.*

1822.

The country, that ceases to produce authors, ceases to cultivate literature. They are the impelling oars, that keep the bark in motion. New circumstances, — even the demand of novelty and freshness of language and manner, — require a perpetual renewal of writers. No age is stationary : if it is upon the decline, authors are wanted to lessen the rapidity of the decline : if it is advancing, authors are wanting, to keep pace with the rapidity of the advance.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### *Dante, Milton, Tasso, Gray.*

When we read the allusions of Dante, Milton, or Tasso, to their worldly misfortunes, how our souls alternately tremble and swell!



The writings of such men open to us, as it were, the oracles of a superior state of intelligence! It is as if we were beholding a brilliant sky with its illumined clouds, and saw nothing but shapes of fantastic splendor: — and while we were long and steadily gazing, a magician should supply us with a glass, by which those shapes should at once take precise and legible forms; and disclose to us some revelation of Angels! — The grand ideas, which these inspired poets open to us, might without them have displayed themselves to our eyes in their fantastic shapes; but these are the magicians, who give them legible and intelligible forms!

All the grandeur of the visible and invisible world is a confused assemblage of lights, which it is left to the labour of human genius to develop, arrange, and bring into shape. To this high calling all poetical endowment continually feels itself impelled. It is an exercise, of which the neglect causes the soul to fall into languor and sickness. Of that languor and sickness GRAY is a striking illustration. Fogs huddled up the flame of his mind; and it bred humours and gangrened; — and he died!

How was DANTE employed? Dwelling on the perturbed actions of his early life; and venting his bitter but sublime indignation in sounds which will never cease to echo on the wings of



the winds! How was MILTON employed? In dismissing the memory of proscription and ingratitude for active services of State; — in alleviating the privations of blindness by busying himself with the War of Angels, and the Garden of Eden!

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### CHAPTER XXIII.

*Enjoyments are in the mind.*

1822.

It is a cold and blind opinion that we cannot make the world of our enjoyment in a great measure, what we choose to make it. It is the mind, which creates the noblest and liveliest part of the enjoyment: and the mind is under our discipline, and at our command. The materials for its operation can never be exhausted, and its capacity of new combinations is endless.

As life advances, the intellectual powers become more diversified, the vague ideas of youth become more precise; and a sagacious knowledge of mankind contrasts happily with the warmer pictures of the fancy and the imagination. We throw off all peculiarities, not only personal, but of station or time; — all local and national habits; and think and feel as citizens of all the civilized globe: — as belonging to the past and the future, as well as to the present: and equally interested in the history of intellect and morals.

If we suppose a mode of invention, a delineation of character, a tone of sentiment, a form of expression and style, peculiar to a single country, — (and experience proves that we may suppose it, —) all the sound principles of criticism shew that it must be wrong. The reverse of this is equally true, both as to extent of time and place.

Johnson speaking of the test of time says: « *To works, of which the excellence is not absolute and definite; but gradual and comparative; to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific, but appealing wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration, and continuance of esteem. What mankind have long possessed, they have often examined and compared; and if they persist to value the possession, it is because frequent comparisons have confirmed opinion in its favour. The reverence due to writings that have long subsisted, is therefore the consequence of the acknowledged and indubitable positions, that what has been longest known has been most considered; and what is most considered is best understood.* »

Had we the age of Methusalem, we could not live long enough to muster all the moral knowledge, that History, illuminated by Fancy and Imagination, offers. We could not live long enough to master the *good* books necessary for

this purpose, which Europe has produced only since the Revival of Learning. The extreme ignorance of modern superficiality and prejudice supposes that these were barbarous ages. This cannot be justly said even of the three centuries which preceded what is thus called the *Revival of Learning*. The manners and compositions of the *Troubadours* are a sufficient refutation of this silly calumny.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

*Improvement of Age : Extinction of powers by Death.*

1822.

As the powers of the mind expand and strengthen, the sources of happiness greatly increase. The eager desire of knowledge, when it exists in youth, is baffled by a feebleness of capacity, and languor of attention, that sickens and at last satiates by the daily experience of renewed hope ending in disappointment.

As the faculties have become matured, and have gained by a long course of exercise a facility of execution which leads to the accomplishment of what they undertake, they find a certainty of gratification in their labours, which carries them on without abatement of energy, or weariness of effort.

The mind feels no joy so great as the consciousness of its own power, and nothing more mortifying than that of its own impotence. The age therefore of a cultivated mind is often more complacent, and even more luxurious, than the youth. It is the reward of the due use of the endowments bestowed by nature: while they, who in youth have made no provision for age, are left like an unsheltered tree, stripped of its leaves and its branches, shaking and withering before the cold blasts of winter.

In truth, nothing is so happy to itself and so attractive to others, as a genuine and ripened imagination, that knows its own powers, and throws forth its treasures with frankness and fearlessness. The more it produces, the more capable it becomes of production: the creative faculty grows by indulgence; and the more it combines, the more means and varieties of combination it discovers.

When Death comes to destroy that mysterious and magical union of capacities and acquirements which has brought a noble genius to this point of power, how frightful and lamentable is the effect of the stroke, that stops the current which was wont to put this mighty formation into activity! Perhaps the incomprehensible Spirit may have acted in conjunction with its corporeal

adherents to the last ! Then in one moment what darkness and destruction follows a single gasp of breath ! —

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## CHAPTER XXV,

### *Retirement.*

Though Retirement is necessary to cherish those seeds of great genius or great knowlege, which nature sometimes confers, yet it requires nice judgment and unbending discipline to manage this retirement rightly. It is subject to a thousand dangers and destructive misuses.

It often encourages us into a fatal over-estimate of ourselves, from want of the opportunity of comparison : and this is followed by disappointment, bitterness, and misanthropy, because others do not award to us the same portion of merit or power.

It often brings on languor, and even torpor, from want of the presence of the stimulant of competition.

All however which is lost in idle company, beyond that which is absolutely necessary for recreation, is positively pernicious. It breeds idle passions; it fosters prejudices; it debilitates; it degrades.



It happens that the greater part of the lives of most of the great geniuses of the world has been an active life. Change and variety give a vigour to the ideas, and freshen their colours.

When Grief takes possession of the mind, nothing is so conducive to the disease as Retirement.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### *Vanity.*

Of all the Passions, Vanity is that, of which the gratifications are least, and the rewards most at the mercy and caprice of others. It is founded on a deception; and a deception, which, being apparent, immediately provokes its own defeat.

To seek distinctions for those merits, which we are conscious belong to us, is a different thing. This may be Ostentation: it is not Vanity: sometimes it arises from a better motive than Ostentation. It may be sought as a more satisfactory test of that desert, which we believe that we possess.

To be satisfied with ourselves, seems to be an almost universal desire, implanted in us by Providence for some good purpose: this feeling appears to be absolutely necessary for that complacency, without which there can be no enjoyment, nor sense of respectability.



The confidence, that arises from the calm consciousness of just pretension, discourages Envy, and drives her from her aim, to scatter her arrows in the air: — she throws away her quiver; and becomes as servile as she before was fierce and insolent.

He, who has real qualities of preeminence of an high kind, may so apply them, by the aid of prudent management, as to obtain all the advantage over the world to which they entitle him. In truth, high talents, highly cultivated, may be almost victorious over sickness, and many of the human misfortunes that most touch the heart.

But this cannot be without virtue; without fortitude, and incessant discipline of the feelings; without judgment; without an entire elevation above the vanities of the world.

To see men possessed of talents to win the applause of the wise, wasting their time and energies in seeking the admiring gaze of Folly, and the shouts of the senseless Mob, fills one with a mixture of pity and indignation.

Heaven in its mercy has bounded the views of those, whose capacities are only fitted to execute the duties of a narrow sphere, to limits equally narrow. They think only of Self, and those immediately connected with Self; and suppose all to be idle waste of toil, which concerns itself with any thing beyond. « *My business is*

» *with my own affairs,* » they cry: « *that is sufficient for me, without meddling with others! Let others do the same: and then all will be well!* »

That extended reflection which places its own happiness and consequence on the welfare or improvement it confers on others, is to them incomprehensible!

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*The desire of esteem and approbation.*

1822.

It is an irreversible inherent in our nature, to desire the good opinion of others; and to be soothed by their concurrence in our sorrows. This creates an impulse, that seldom fails to vent itself in an appeal, by which it may be gratified.

But this is not true of our sorrows only: we wish to make the world converts to us in all our opinions; and when we feel that we have sufficient strength in us, we are not satisfied without bringing them to the test of the public judgment.

The experiment is often perilous; and many learn by the trial how much they have overestimated themselves. When, in the process of putting into execution the object of their ambitious desires they find their strength fail them,

they are apt to resort to artifice to give them a false appearance of power : but affectation is the herald of weakness ; and precipates their fall.

Conscious power is always direct: an author does not resort to the trick of covering his thoughts with false splendor, till he at least suspects that the thoughts have not force enough to maintain themselves. He, who is full of the thought itself, will not waste his time and labour upon superfluous ornament.

But young authors of doubtful genius are almost always affected. If strength grows with their years, they throw it off: otherwise they continue affected through life.

The fear and delicacy of a youthful mind, even where there is strength, often makes him shrink from venturing his own genuine opinions.

He is apt to suppose that something more recondite, and far fetched, is necessary ; and is afraid to rely on the simple tints of truth. Experience gradually shews him, that what springs naturally in the mind, is equally acceptable to all.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*Gibbon.*

1822.

GIBBON, as he perceived his gigantic work growing beneath his hands, must have felt a mighty swell of triumph.

To have digested, and arranged into lucid order, the recondite materials of such an extent of time and place, — what an Herculean task! What a proof of the effects of steadiness, calmness, and perseverance!

His talents and labours indeed bore little similitude to those of a poet. His business was rather in sifting, criticising, clearing away, and recombining upon a more compressed and more convenient plan, than in creating, supplying sentiment, enriching with wide speculation, or presenting imaginative and brightly - coloured pictures. It must be confessed, that there is a vast preponderance of mechanism in his work: and therefore that the long and continued perusal becomes wearisome. We are always travelling over a plain: the inequality of mountains and vallies never comes to relieve us: or it is rather like a canal, for which human labour has pierced heights and profundities; and brought all to a strait line, and a level surface.

When the *poet* arranges and combines, he also *creates* part of his materials ; and embodies aerial essences. If therefore his work accumulates to sufficient size , he beholds an edifice raised at his call , *new* not only in *form* but in *matter*.

But if the difficulty ended with *creation* ; it might still be comparatively easy. Mere *novelty* of matter will not do , unless the matter be of a certain excellence of quality. Mere *whim* may mix up new ingredients, of which it may constitute a fantastic building. To use Johnson's test, not only must the ideas of a poetical edifice «*be new,*» but they must be so conformable to the general sympathy of the human bosom , that «*he that reads them must persuade himself that he always felt them.*»

To effect this , requires such a perpetual stream of native energies ; such an intimate acquaintance with the varied emotions of the heart ; such a power of unforced imagination ; such a faculty of identifying oneself with the character represented , as nature bestows on very few in the lapse of ages.

But an author may be far inferior to all these high pretensions, yet deserve well of his cotemporaries , and of posterity. He ought to be original ; he ought to be unaffected , frank , and sincere. If his object be truth ; if his first im-



pulse be to communicate what presses upon his own bosom, he cannot totally fail in conveying either instruction or pleasure.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### *Of the Poetical Character.*

1822.

Notwithstanding all the fine things, which it has been the custom to say of poets, nothing perhaps has been said, which is equal to the merits of the true poetical character.

Poetry is the oracle, which forms the channel of union between the intellectual and the material world. There is a world within us, of which it is the interpreter.

Inspiration is not improperly attributed to poets. —

The habit of contemplating what is sublime or beautiful, sometimes makes them fastidious, or severe, in judging of the mass of mankind; and sometimes makes them what unfeeling censors call melancholy and querulous. They see mankind endowed with a capacity to be happy, yet making themselves and others miserable by their vile passions, and dull pursuits: — their intelligence shews to them the inmost recesses and evil workings of the human heart; — and



this susceptibility receives excessive pain from that, which to common dispositions is harmless.

Are we asked, why Providence orders, or permits, those magnificent emotions to be produced by human inspiration and human skill, which are not produced by the realities of life? The answer is, that Providence may no more deign to explain its mysteries in this, than in a thousand other important but inexplicable questions. Providence has ordered, that of innumerable objects of matter, all the delight should arise from the associations which the mind adds to them; and which common intellects can only perceive by the aid of the lights that the poetic talent furnishes.

It unhappily is found that Poets do not always know their duty, nor perform this service as they ought. They do not suppose that it is their business to pourtray the natural associations, to which the human bosom offers a prepared mirror: but persuade themselves that an higher merit will be attained by exhibiting some capricious and forced association of their own, in which they think there may be more novelty, and hope there may be more genius.

But there are cases, in which it requires more power, and more brilliance to follow nature than to invent: and more skill to bring out the changing and evanescent tints that dance about,

and dazzle like the hues of the sky, than to create those grotesque combinations, which can interest only by producing surprise.

Such things are effected by an artificial imagination, which requires neither sensibility, nor the knowlege of the human bosom. The imagination which brings forward the visions that lie at the bottom of the human soul, is a flame that blazes with the pure light of Truth; and does not seek to throw its rays upon the hobgobleries of the false Enchanter's forests; but to illumine the shrines of Elysian gardens; and the delicious shades of Eden and Paradise.

To the true poet belongs a depth of intimacy with all Moral and Psychological knowlege: his mental resources must create for him the picture of Man in all his conflicting emotions: he must identify himself with the actor, and with him who is acted upon: he must feel as they would feel, and speak as they would speak. This is what no art can do; what no reasoning can effect; what no labour can approach.

If we could suppose a person of these gifts in full possession of his faculties; conscious of his powers, and willing to exert them; yet free from those counterbalancing evils of life, with which it seems the destiny of our nature too often to be overwhelmed, he would be a sort of God, both from his aptitude to receive and

to confer happiness! To such a mind all the forms of things, that animate and adorn the Globe, must be rapture!

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### CHAPTER XXX.

*Birth combined with a competent property.*

1822.

Education; independence; ease; an intercourse with those ranks of society, which excite refined emotion; leisure to pursue honour rather than interest; an habitual intercourse from infancy with those dignified sentiments which teach us to prize fame above selfish and sensual gratifications, seem all to constitute the appropriate sphere, in which honorable Birth combined with a competent fortune is entitled to move.

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### CHAPTER XXXI.

*Mellowness of Age.*

1822.

Though the Soul must be assumed to be an Essence separate from the Body, yet in its association with the human form, it is long before its powers are expanded into maturity. If

it be new to *this* world, it has every thing to learn on its own account, independent of the obstructions which its « mortal mould » opposes.

Very young men have in a few instances produced prodigies of blazing genius. But perhaps it may be pronounced that those productions have almost always wanted mellowness. Language does not flow easy, full, and comprehensive, till after long use. But time and expérience are still more necessary for that selection of circumstances, from which all perplexing details have withdrawn themselves.

Age gives a « sober certainty » to the sentiments; and Memory is softened by a tone of tender melancholy, which speaks with an attractive and overcoming authority. The associations gathered in an extended course of years become richer, more contrasted, and more deep. They seem uttered under a sort of more awful responsibility, as of one who is about to deliver his account. They are free from the false vivacity of mere animal spirits; and strike as the results of long and calm meditation.

All knowlege, when first acquired, causes a state of mental fervor, which is not suited to its due appreciation. Time and collision in the brain, assign it at last its proper place. The material and immaterial world gradually unite themselves into a rich and inexhaustible texture: —

but this is the work of years of intellectual attention and toil : at first they are separated, discordant, and apt to act in contrary directions !

It is only a long intimacy with the affecting events of life , that combines the various appearances in the scenery of Nature with our most touching moral affections , sensations , and recollections : that hangs a vision on every tree ; and sees the images of former delight in the flying colours and fantastic shapes of the clouds.

The young are light-hearted : or if they have grief , it is commonly the result of intemperate passions , or over-heated fancy. In the old , grief is not loud , or vehement ; but contemplative , rational , moral , and softening : — in the associations therefore that it makes , it teaches lessons of wisdom ; and improves the understanding , as well as mends the heart.

A rich fancy is like an Æolian harp , that catches the passage of the breeze , and throws out music from the contact. But the depth of the tones depends upon the richness , the activity , and the preparation of the strings. — Who but must lament , when the strings , which fifty years have mellowed , are broke , and sound no more ! — Shall we not then be filled with regret , when the machinery of a Brain , that an whole life has been bringing to perfection , stops for ever , and



all the tablets on which thousands of memorials were inscribed, become blank! —

It is the destiny of our mortal state! — We know not why the slightest injury to our bodies, dependent on a thousand trivial casualties, may at any time destroy our corporeal existence; and thus prematurely turn to nothing all the treasures that the mind has been accumulating! — But it a strong motive for not losing a day in registering all that it is in our power to preserve. The long night may come, when we least expect it; and the eternal veil of darkness may efface all that is written upon the mirror of our minds!

What passes within the temple of the human intellect, cannot be guessed but by the aid of the outward symbols of language. The richest and most abundant genius appears to the common eye only like him, who sees nothing except that which is embodied without him. Who could have guessed at the internal existence of the pictures and sentiments, which COWPER'S *Task* has exhibited, till the Author's pen brought them into bodily shape, and thus exhibited them to the view of others!

But even an Author himself very frequently does not know what is within him, till he thus brings it to the test. Beneath the mantle of his mind lie hid a thousand images, of which till he begins to disturb the veil, he did not suspect



the existence. Gradually the forms come forth; and brighten, and multiply, as he continues the operation.

Let no one flatter himself that they will come forth of themselves; that they will burst the pall that covers them, without effort; and that industry is necessary only where the native gift has not been conferred.

No genius, when he feels the feebleness of his first steps, can guess the mighty course he is capable of running at last, by the aid of energetic and long-enduring exercise.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### *Frailty of Memory.*

1822.

Let no man lull himself with the belief, that what he once knows, he shall always know;— and therefore neglect to register those meditations and observations in which he has occupied himself. The value of what he will accumulate by continued industry, will gradually display itself. The register enables him to compare his ideas; to derive confidence from their uniformity; or to found amendment on their inconsistency: to take advantage of the varying colours of diction, which varying humours suggest; and to

catch the flying distinctions, which some happier ray of brightness discloses.

Will it be objected that it induces a careless habit of composition, of crude thoughts, and imperfect language? It may be answered, that it at least brings the thoughts to a nicer test, than when they are suffered to hurry through the mind without an attempt to cloathe them in words. He who reserves all his efforts for great occasions, will find his powers stiff and constrained from want of practice and habit: and this want of ease will destroy the good, and make that, which is trite, intolerable. When all depends on one throw of the dye, it is impossible to have that self-possession, which is necessary to excellence. He, whose fame is to depend on repeated displays, does not commit his all upon a particular occasion: he therefore feels himself complacent; — and the very carelessness with which he lets out his strength, gives it that charm of native vigour, which goes far to ensure success. —

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### *Worldly Cunning.*

High hopes and just ambitions have very little chance of worldly success, without bending to worldly means. Vigour and swiftness will not win

a long race. Management, secrecy, economy of thought, manœuvre, intrigue, are all necessary for success in the contest with mankind. The contender must act; and not talk: — when he means most, he must say least; — and when he intends to move to the right, he must seem to be about to start for the left. He must waste no anger in threats: he must execute his vengeance without notice; and cover it with smiles, while he executes it.

The whole moral and intellectual process, by which such an habit of conduct is acquired, is destructive of the course of discipline by which genius is cherished and fructified.

The exact conformity between thought and expression is among the primary ingredients of speculative genius. To habituate oneself to speak the reverse of what one thinks, is the meanest of all human debasements. It corrupts the whole internal structure of Man, and makes the blessed gift of language the mere instrument of deceit.

What test can there be of the rectitude of thought, when communication does not bring it to the standard of the judgment of others? He who writes what is plausible, rather than what is true, has no eloquence; no fixed principles; none of that inspiring presence of the objects he delineates, which is the great sign of real genius.

Whenever men of genius have gone into the world, they have been remarked for that openness and sincerity, which worldlings call the greatest of all indiscretions. It was a notorious trait in the character of BURKE. (1)

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### *Vulgar Taste.*

1822.


It is strange, how easily the minds of the great mass of readers are interested! They are stirred by what revolts a reader of acute perception and nice taste. Characters rudely and shapelessly delineated, in coarse, bald, clumsy language; without sentiment, or reflection; — not brought into difficult and hesitating conflicts; but thrown together in an ordinary way; — meeting without motive, and acting under the impulse of superficial chance; therefore developing no secret and curious spring of action; and laying open none of the hidden movements of the soul: — even these form the matter of Narratives, which engross for hours the attention of those who will read no other class of books.

(1) See an anecdote exhibiting a similar trait of LORD CHATHAM in *Lord Orford's Memoirs of Geo. II.*

To such readers they must act as magical signs, which conjure up the images conformable to their own fancies, or to the recollections of their own experience. It is thus perhaps that their minds have been habituated to behold mankind in association: — looking upon human beings as accustomed to act without depth of thought, or discrimination of character; and delighting themselves only with figures in motion; — with bustle and sound!

They who are familiar with pictures of life better drawn, better grouped, better contrasted; exhibited only in situations of deep interest; and holding no language but that which is eloquent, pathetic, or full of deep and sagacious observation, nauseate these unintellectual, unskilful, vulgar, common-place delineations; — as he, who had continually gazed on the productions of SALVATOR ROSA, would look on the scene-paintings of a Fair; or the daubs of a showman in a Market-place!

Yet I am not sure, that even this reading is not better than no reading at all. Whatever stirs the mind innocently, however rude it be, is better than stagnation.



## CHAPTER XXXV.

*Paucity of the works of English Poets.*

1822.

Few of our English Poets have produced any great quantity of compositions. It seems, that either the labour was too exhausting; or that other pursuits more satisfactory, or more pleasant, withdrew them from the Muses. It is at least impossible to deny the inference from these facts, that great difficulties obstruct the attainment of superiority in this Art.

For my own part, I should assign the most effect to the exhausture of animal spirits. There is a glow and ardour necessary for the genuine production, of which few persons can support the heat long together. Every object described is present in full splendor to the agitated eye of the Poet. Nothing less can give him the true vigour; — those brilliant colours of language, without which the work is all hollow, still, lifeless form!

All the abilities that ever informed humanity, all the perfection of Art, never supplied the defect of this ideal presence, — any more than the chisel of the Statuary can give to the cold marble, which it models into the human shape, a voice and beating heart!



Language itself, even when the feelings and ideas are perfect, is long before it submits sufficiently to a poet's command. It is seldom that it presents itself easy, ripe, and full yet concise, till after years of incessant exercise.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### *Common-place Characters.*

1822.

It probably happens to numbers of Mankind, that their outward senses are quickly and lively moved by that, which they have no mental mirror within them capable of reflecting: nor of which perhaps they have even a *memory* sufficient to recall, distinctly, the nature of the impression made.

Such persons cannot bear solitude, or their own thoughts. Reading is to them dry, barren, and motionless. But sometimes the possession of animal spirits makes them entertaining companions: and if they have a ready judgment of that which is presented to them, not unuseful members of society. They often, amid the bustle and irritation of company, even outshine the speculative genius, whose powers are better fitted for silence and solitude. But all their faculties and means of superiority die with the occasion: out

lasting neither the time, nor the place in which they were displayed.

If Man is designed to have wants, and enjoy gratifications, beyond those which are necessary for his corporeal existence, then the use of what supplies more visionary and exalted enjoyments, cannot be questioned.

« But » says the *dull matter-of-fact censor of manners*, « give me one who performs well the duties of life ; who goes through the daily routine of actions, which the calls of his neighbours impose upon him ! I want no flowers and whims, and airy castles which every wind may disperse ! »

It is well that the blind can thus content themselves with their blindness. Were three fourths of mankind to know their own deficiencies, discontent with themselves would make life hateful to them. Ordinary understandings are but the creatures of the circumstances, in which they are placed : they see not beyond the manners, the habits, the passions, the objects of ambition, the conduct, of those with whom they associate : they have no spring in their minds capable of altering or enlarging these views. They cannot see that, if it is the business of the majority to confine themselves to the due performance of their own narrow part, it is the business of others to direct the conduct of the whole, or

of large portions, of their fellow-beings. They do not see that those judgments or rules of action, which end in themselves, can be of little value.

He, who dislikes generalisations, exhibits a strong symptom of a dry, unfertile, intellect. He can behold, or comprehend, nothing but in its actual workings and details: and always mistakes the accidental form for the essence.

But as he, who is engaged in speculation, is commonly less fitted for action, than he who does not concern himself with any thing but that which he is doing; and as there must be *many* to obey, for *one* who directs, all this is the arrangement of apparent wisdom for the proper movement of human affairs.

Our anger therefore at encountering these narrow notions is not well-placed. We ought to consider them as necessary appendages to the station of those who entertain them. We ought to pity, rather than resent them.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

*Knowledge of Moral Truth.*

1822.

It may seem easy to discover the *Truth*, and to relate it: but the rarity of those who have

done so successfully, proves the mistake of this supposition.

The mass of mankind go on blindfold from day to day; or see only the little circumference within the reach of their own feet and hands. Providence has ordered that the veil shall not be with-drawn, but to those who shall have rendered themselves worthy of it by intellectual culture, applied to the expansion of intellectual gifts.

But there is a delight, which outruns expression, as we behold that veil receding before our view: as we see objects clear up, and take their respective outlines, shapes, and colours: as the eye becomes strong enough to gaze without being dazzled; and to distinguish variety without being confused!

The moral congruities of human life; the nice dependencies; the deep and concealed order of conflicting appearances; the good lying hid under seeming evil; the frequent folly and emptiness of what appears great; and the dignity and grandeur of virtue in obscurity and distress; — these are not revealed to light and vulgar minds: or if the memories of such minds are loaded with lessons which explain them, these lessons are repeated in the manner of parrots; and the repeaters still wonder and doubt in their hearts as much as before; or throw them off from their consideration as rapidly as the words escape from their lips.

They talk as others talk ; and act as others act ; and are kept in the right direction only by moving with the stream.

All great moral writers of all nations have generally come to the same opinions upon main points which regard practical life. And this must have been done sincerely , and in right of their own original conclusions ; because he , who has taken opinions at second hand , and repeated what he borrowed from others , has never yet gained a permanent reputation.

This shews the consistency and certainty of MORAL SCIENCE ; and obviates all suspicion , that its doctrines are the result of caprice and hazard. The false opinions in Morals , which present themselves to the understandings of men of inferior capacity , or of violent passions , arise from the contracted scale on which they view objects. They see but *themselves* ; and forget , or omit , all beyond. What is their interest according to this *narrow* regard , is the reverse of their interest , when they embrace the consideration of *others* : because if it be just to act to others as they propose to act , it is just for others *so* to act to *them*. It is their interest therefore to forbear , that they may not expose themselves to retribution.

The foundation of all Poetry is Morality : and he who has so much occupied himself with the ornamental and technical part of Poetry , as to



have neglected laying the foundation properly, will rather please at first than continue to possess a durable interest.

Even POPE is said to have been not an entire master of the scheme of Moral Philosophy, which he attempted to convey to the world through the pleasing and rich channel of Poetry; and of which he is reported to have borrowed too much from the confused theory of his friend Bolinbroke.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

*Mental preeminence the result of Culture.*

It having been observed, that as the Earth will not bring forth her best fruits but by the labour and care and skill of Man, so the Mind will not produce its best works but by culture and toil; it is a fair inference that excellences, not only uncontemplated but even beyond hope, may be attained by the enduring exertion which shall long continue to stimulate native power.

It often happens that when we first contemplate a subject, it is all obscurity: but after long and patiently poring upon it, the clouds gradually withdraw themselves; and all becomes as transparent as a pure stream, that shews the bed over which it runs, brilliant as a mirror.



BURKE'S mind continued to improve to the last. JOHNSON'S powers were in an equal state of progressive vigour almost to the last. And DRYDEN'S most nervous and best poems were notoriously written on the verge of seventy. The decay of the Body may counteract the growing faculties of the Mind: but if the Body remains neutral, the Mind that is kept in proper exercise, is certain to augment its capacity every added year.

It is possible, that in the mere freshness and activity of *Fancy*, or tenderness of *Sentiment*, a poet may be more glowing in youth. In whatever is not mere Imagery, or simple Sentiment, but is compounded in part of that which is intellectual, it is more consonant both to reason and experience to suppose the reverse.

The digested and conquered treasures of the Mind increase with the days that produce them; and practice adds wonderfully to facility and readiness of use.

It was never intended that we should understand the relation between matter and intellect, unless darkly, until we had refined our understandings, and ameliorated their powers, by discipline, long exertion, case, and art.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

*Inequality of Destinies.*

1822.

The lots of Life certainly seem to be cast with great inequality of Good and Evil. Deep, frequent, and inevitable Misfortunes seem often to be the fate of those, who apparently do not deserve them: and whole families appear to be marked out as the victims of Sorrow, Sickness, Injustice, Oppression, or premature Death.

It is a sublime picture to behold

*« A great man struggling with the storms of Fate: »*

but will this reflection console him for his sufferings? It is true that

*« The hues of Bliss more brightly glow,  
Chastised by sabler tints of Woe: »*

but then they must be in some degree proportioned to each other!

The wand of Imagination may pierce through clouds with effect, where sunshine is behind them: — but where it is all darkness, the deeper the wand goes, the more the despondence.

There are delusions, which are beneficial and virtuous: there are delusions which are dangerous and wrong. To drink the oblivious cup of Imagination may sometimes enable us to subdue

Grief: but it may sometimes lull us into neglect of our duties.

To fix the line of distinction, is a subject of perpetual uneasiness to a conscientious mind.

## CHAPTER XL.

*In what compositions an union of all the mental faculties is displayed.*

1822.

It is not easy to believe that excellence was ever attained in any high department of Composition, but by an assemblage of all the best powers of the Mind: fancy; imagination; sentiment; strong, and active, versatile, reason; memory. All the great moral conclusions, expressed with that energy with which great genius expresses them, are, in general, the complicated result of all these united powers! Above all, this is illustrated by the pen of DANTE, in whom this union is exhibited with the most force, and the most conciseness. It appears also most majestically in every part of MILTON'S two great Epic Poems!

So much for the narrow idea, that imagery alone constitutes true poetry!



## CHAPTER XLI.

*Knowlege comes too late.*

1822.

It is among the ills which our destiny has incurred, that Knowlege, and the due appretiation of Knowlege, come too late. When we are grown old, and have a short space before us, we see what mighty things could have been done, if we had made use of the time which is past.

But the feelings of those, whose senses are best fitted to lay in the stores of future eminence, are apt at an early age to be too tumultuous for calm study. It is probable that if the reason and judgment are predominantly exercised in youth, and the more creative faculties of the mind but little called into action, it will happen, that, as years advance, the intellect will become too dry and sterile. A cold, fastidious, repudiating judgment is not compatible with those plastic energies, which alone produce what is great or beautiful.

The Memory may be exercised to the oppression of more dignified and more effective faculties; and may induce an habit of dependence, sufficient to destroy the self-reliance which is a necessary cooperative stimulus in the work of Invention.

In the course of experience, innumerable impressions are made upon us, which form links of association with the records of past times; giving them an interest and use, which they wanted in our younger and simpler years. This may be a reason why we are often carried through that labour in age, which the strength of youth could not accomplish. — And are these labours of trivial import?

If a whole population were made up of men of business who work for hire or lucre, and whose livelihood or whose ambition depends on such work, then all the higher productions of literature; — especially the works of Fancy and Morality, — might be considered as mere flowers of empty ornament, which, if they gave some pleasure, might still be deemed not even innocent; but rather, seducers of the understanding, and undue softeners of the heart.

This is however to suppose a state of society not advanced beyond a very low point of riches and civilisation. The highest object of Riches is to obtain the command of independence, refinement, and luxury; to be at liberty to cultivate and enjoy all those improvements of the mind, to which Providence has permitted that we should reach by labour and ingenuity. — There cannot exist a more important benefactor to Society, than a man of literary genius, who duly exerts his powers.



## CHAPTER XLII.

*Ubiquity and perpetuity of Genius.*

1822.

Ubiquity and perpetuity are the mighty prerogatives possessed by the author of great and solid genius. The worth of whatever illustrates the moral or intellectual state of Man ; of whatever reflects the most touching sentiments of the human bosom ; is so fully felt, that sooner or later it will find its way among the enlightened part of Mankind.

Books may indeed be endlessly multiplied without adding to human knowlege : but just thoughts , which are original to the writer , and are adequately expressed , can never be useless.

It would be well , if we could blot out all the authors who write from memory , and at second-hand. They are like that sort of legal witnesses in a Court , whose testimony , if they speak only from hearsay , is rejected by a Judge.

Whether he , who by the aid of a clear memory can supply himself with all the ideas , and all the knowlege , which he wants ; or he , on whom Nature has conferred the power of originating them , is the most happy , — is a very complicated question. The original thinker is commonly in a struggle : and the fever of intense thought



often wears and exhausts him. But he consequently enjoys a force of mental gratification, and a consciousness of power, to which others are strangers.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

*Regret for the Past. — Serpentine wisdom.*

1822.

In looking back upon the Past, I can see innumerable cases in which my present judgment of things would have directed me to have acted otherwise. Probably this is but one among the common misfortunes of humanity: age and experience, when it turns backward its eyes, and examines the road it has travelled over, generally sees much which it ought to have avoided; and many points, which it ought to have reached by other paths.

When we most wish to become independent of others, we are so weak as to use means, which put us most at their mercy: and to raise the envy and rivalry of others, we furnish them with the easiest means of defeating us.

Impatience ruins us: calmness and perseverance win the race.

But there is another rule for success, still more potent than even these: that which the sagacious

*Sir Henry Wotton*, who knew the world admirably, gave to Milton as a direction for conducting himself in his Travels: *i pensieri stretti, ed il viso sciolto*: (*thoughts close, and looks loose.*) One may go still farther: «*scarcely let your left hand know, what your right hand is doing.*» There is a cold self-confidence, which goes far to secure the fulfilment of its own desires: but open boasting, and ostentatious assumption, provoke their own defeat. A man may do the most audacious things: but he must conceal his audacity under the most humble and deceitful demeanour. Nothing is conceded to right: every thing, to intrigue and sinister motives.

Those great talents, which commence their conduct in the world, as if they believed mankind such as their own noble imaginations present them as aspiring to be, are always disappointed and defeated at every step.

The most active and ruling passions in society are Vanity and Envy: but in a great number of persons, (probably the larger proportion,) they are under a great deal of management; because a sort of instinctive sense tells them, that the outward appearance of these passions would entirely defeat the object they seek. Where they *do* appear, there is all the crime without any of the success. Against open Vanity and open Envy every one is in arms.

If it did not happen that worldly encouragement is often necessary to give play even to the purest and most direct talents, their common inaptitude to gain this encouragement might be the less regretted. For in the effort to gain it, they often sacrifice more substantial qualities: and when they are drawn out of the retirement, where they are the masters of their own free thoughts, they lose the native vigour in which their main merit would lie.

But genius is sometimes ignorant of the extent of its own capacity, till strong excitement has brought it into full exercise.

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## CHAPTER XLIV.

*Expansion of Genius not overcome by Adversity or Difficulty.*

1822.

The very things, that would seem to operate against the advancement of Genius, and the acquisition of knowledge, are sometimes the grand instruments of their progress. At other times Genius breaks through all obstacles, and acts in defiance of them.

It is not much ease, which gives the faculties power to play. There is a degree of severe exercise necessary, which strong excitement alone

can prompt. It is said of Lawyers, that no one ever persevered to distinction in that laborious profession, whom some strong necessity did not urge to great and laborious effort.

Neither adversity therefore, nor other avocations, will crush the expansion of Genius: — sometimes they will not even impede it. BURNS and BLOOMFIELD are instances of this.

The powers of the human mind vary so much, require such different food, and display themselves at such different periods of life, that no universal rule on this subject can perhaps be established. But whatever debilitates toil, and weakens attention, cannot, surely, be doubted to operate unfavourably.

Man is so strange a compound of inconsistent qualities; our virtues and vices so border on each other; and so often cross the line; — that the imperfect regulation of our hearts is, above all, in continual inimicality with the improvement of our intellects. Our passions put us into straits, which will not allow us the free play of our reason. Vapours rise before us; and limit or discolour the objects of our sight. We court these vapours, because our eyes are not strong enough to behold the truth.

But Truth, and Truth alone, must be the pursuit of Genius, and of Learning. Nothing else will secure fame; nothing else will make an author's

writings live. The flimsy plausibilities of perverted talent will disperse, like fogs before the Sun.

He may be above the influence of the vain passions of the world, who chooses to be so. Independence, firmness, dignity, rectitude of thought, will secure him respect: they will operate as a charm against insult and depression: they will bow down the insolence of riches, and the scorn of rank. But there is a dazzle both in wealth and in titles, which few are strong-minded enough to be unmoved by. And it happens too frequently, that when this strength of mind is assumed, it degenerates into countervailing assumption, which takes the shape of a coarse rudeness.

The stern virtue, which thus finds itself at leisure to unmask Truth, and hold those unrestrained conversations with her, for which the submission to worldly desires disqualifies us, is probably among the very rarest of human distinctions. MILTON perhaps had it: BACON had it not: and ADDISON had it not.

Will it be said that a greater mixture with human frailties makes us more familiar with them; and more tender to them? Must then the mind be ignorant of that, of which it has not had practical experience? Will it be contended that SHAKESPEARE'S conception of the characters of *Lady Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Lear*, *Hamlet*, etc.,



arose from personal observation? The more free the mind is for the play of its faculties, the more strongly and the more truly it will conceive!

We know scarcely any thing of the private history of SHAKESPEARE: — but it must be presumed, that his mind was free from great cares, sorrows, and difficulties, because he always displays an elasticity, a cheerfulness, a sunshine, quite incompatible with the load of anxiety and woe!

In MILTON we perceive more of suffering and of gloom: — but he throws off the incumbent weight like a giant. In DANTE, and in TASSO, the elastic force, which no oppression could destroy, is more extraordinary. Indeed in the case of TASSO it shews the strength and blaze of human genius, in a light of which the wonder can never be exhausted.

## CHAPTER XLV.

*Minute and scientific exactness of description of natural scenery not the most poetical. Mischief of false theories.*

1822.

I remember that D.<sup>r</sup> *Aikin* somewhere recommends a poet to describe with the eye and the precision of a Naturalist. This betrays a very narrow and erroneous conception of the prin-



ciples of Poetry. To follow this advice would be to act directly contradictory to the business of a poet. It assumes him to be not only a mere describer of material objects; but a describer of them in detail. He praises, on this account, T. WARTON'S *First of April*; of which the fault is, that it is too much confined to mere description; and too little enriched by sentiment and reflection.

A great Poet loves Nature: but he loves it only in association with Intellect. If therefore he is sometimes tired of mere scenery, it must not be supposed that his love of the grand features of landscape; of rural objects; of the changing hues of seasons; of the sun, the skies, and the air; is affected! He must sometimes prefer to contemplate all these things through the medium of his fancy, which can combine them with the internal stores of his intellect. — At the moment that outward objects present themselves, they often rather disturb than complete the internal operations of the mind.

It is not at the moment of their presence, that the effect of the riches, which they infuse, is accomplished.

Erroneous theories are very mischievous. They act like a blight, or hang like a weight, on many spirits. If those who are bold, regard them not, others who are more timid and diffident,

but not with less genius, are overcome by them. — How many good poets have false theories in the art of poetry suppressed; and how many bad poets have they hatched into birth!

Nature need only be left to herself; and the intellectual fruit of a man of genius will always take a proper form. Whether it take the form of imagery, or sentiment, or reflection, or all combined, it will be in its proper place.

But the multitude are always taught to set up some temporary exclusive test of excellence, (generally artificial,) which is, consequently, for the most part wrong. Each varying test, elected by caprice, rules its little day; and is forgot. But each in succession brings forward an hundred technical competitors, who die with their prototype.

It is curious to observe how the augmenting and kindling force of DRYDEN'S genius augmented his powers of precise description in his last days, (as his *Fables* evince,) probably without having increased the perspicacity of his eye for natural scenery. Several astonishing instances of this are exhibited in the unrivaled Tale of *Theodore and Honoria*.

It is true that GRAY was a Botanist; and ROUSSEAU was a Botanist: but other great poets may be named, who perhaps knew not the leaf of an oak from the leaf of an ash-tree. —

## CHAPTER XLVI.

*Inequality of mental gifts.*

1822.

It may be asked, why Providence should deal so unequally with her mental gifts? Then let it be also asked, why one human being is born robust or beautiful, and another weakly or deformed? Why one is tall; another short; why nature gives one an amiable temper and disposition; to others one which torments themselves and all within their reach? We know not the cause of these inequalities: we are sure that they generally exist!

Of the varied seeds of genius, thus bestowed, the nutriment and expansion depends on the nicest management; and often perhaps upon accidents, which no management can controul. An excessive excitement of the sensibility may be fatal: a blight of it may be equally destructive. The neglect of the intellectual faculties may leave the sensibility without use; and the over-use of them may turn aside the native force of outward impressions.

The deepest genius is not always the most ready; or soonest developed. Strong ingredients are often long in working; and in their first conflict boil and bubble, and throw up noxious

vapours. What is the result of extensive and complicated views, is not so readily mastered, as slight and superficial prospects. Difficulties and seeming failures will discourage a meek temper: the profound self-confidence, which alone can carry genius forward, will surmount it.

When genius pines beneath discouragement; when neglect palsies its powers; it is wanting in a necessary ingredient. It ought to know by its own internal movements, that of which it may at last be capable, when no one else can see them!

But many may think, (while they suppose what are called works of genius might be produced by half the world,) it is no matter whether works, to which the name of genius is applied, are produced at all!

To inaccurate or slight thinkers, the remote effects of every production of intellectual eminence must be utterly hidden. They do not perceive, or they imperfectly perceive, even its immediate effects either in instruction or amusement: while force or elegance of language, a happy delineation of an interesting image, or a glowing expression of just sentiment, is alone an accession to our mental wealth. The Nation, that has brought its language to an high degree of power, is advanced many steps in the scale of human beings!



## CHAPTER XLVII.

*Extrication from Localities.*

1822.

It is natural to cling to the scenes of our nativity. A heart of deep feeling will tear them away, not without long and convulsive struggles. But they *must* be rooted up, whatever be the pangs it cost. Change of soil is necessary to give vigour to the stem; and colour and flavour and purity to the fruit.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

*The bent of nature beyond the dominion of accident.*

1822.

It can scarcely be deemed a fair question, what course of life it would be prudent to pursue; what would lead to most worldly success; and what would make the individual and his connections most happy? The individual is not the master of himself; or of his destiny. He has calls to which he cannot be deaf; he has feverish desires which indulgence only can allay. The involuntary workings of the mind are always harrassing his attention; and while ideas that visit and



haunt him, remain uncourted and unstudied, he is detained in a state of dissatisfied irritation, which ends in languor and despondence; and sometimes utter loss of faculties.

But in addition to all the principal qualities of genius, a certain degree of fortitude, or adventurous spirit, is necessary to enable it to exert and display itself. Discouragements and blights are sure to attack it; and erroneous criticisms are sure to mislead it.

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## CHAPTER XLIX.

*Addison, Dryden, Johnson.*

1822.

ADDISON was an admirable critic as well as a beautiful writer; and understood to perfection all the principles of poetical invention, and poetical ornament.

Dryden's talents and style were stupendous; but his feelings and his taste were variable and capricious.

JOHNSON was a gigantic master in judgment; and even in taste, when he chose to put his mighty powers to the stretch; as his *Preface to Shakspeare* demonstrably proves: but on common occasions he was perverse, hard, and sometimes coarse and vulgar, in his opinions.



## CHAPTER L.

*On the charge that men of Genius, and high Talents, want judgment, and practical sense. (1)*

10 Nov. 1822.

Is it true, that men of genius and high talents always want judgment; and are unfit for the conduct of affairs? Or is this cry nothing more than the mode, by which coarse, dull, hard-headed men reconcile to themselves their own deficiencies?

It may be said, that the former class may think and judge right!y upon admitted data: but that their warmth is apt to assume inaccurate or false data!

This may sometimes happen: but not exclusively to genius and talents: — and COLDNESS may as probably see too little of facts, as WARMTH may see too *much* of them! —

Genius indeed is, from its generous and noble nature, too commonly inclined to give mankind credit for more virtue and philanthropy than they possess. In this respect genius is undoubtedly more liable to err in its *premises*, than common minds. And we hear enough every day of the charge of « *arguing right upon wrong premises.*»

(1) This is the entire and unaltered copy of a Letter actually sent at the date by the Post to England.

But then we are bound to avoid the dishonesty of taking advantage of this supposed deficiency of judgment with regard to the *assumption of premises*, as a pretence to throw doubt on the accuracy of judgments *founded on admitted premises*.

Mere vulgar men, of dry hard business, do indeed frequently contrive to conduct things to a successful issue, without being able to give satisfactory reasons for what they do; or shew any principle of action. They blunder on by a mere sort of *tact*, which may be said to have something of the character of *instinct*. But then this does not apply when any *question* is raised! — When *that* happens, it must be determined by the rules of reason, and the principles of justice.

Men of business never raise abstract questions: and with still more certainty it may be said, that they are never capable of *resolving* them! —

It was never said, or thought, that men of genius, or high talents, were fitted to *execute* the *drudgery* of their *own* designs or speculations. The question is, what faith is to be put on the soundness of the designs or speculations? —

Now the soundness of a design or speculation must be two-fold. — Not only the superstructure must be true, but the *foundation* must be good. —

The genius , or talent , therefore , is not solid , of which the products do not partake of *both* these qualities !

With regard to execution , a General in Chief, who forms an able and profound plan of a *Campaign* , is no otherwise to blame for the ill execution of any of the respective parts of his Generals of Division , than so far as it depended on his own discretion to make choice of his instruments or agents ; and so far as the choice afforded him was sufficiently ample ! —

I say then , that if the design or speculation, taken abstractedly , be not solid , he who forms it must want solid genius or solid talents.

It is necessary to notice the words « *abstractedly taken* » because where the design or speculation touches SELF , *there* passion may intervene to colour and falsify. I presume it is to this last circumstance that we must look, as furnishing a reason to account for so many men of genius having led a life of error, and exposed themselves to an unbroken series of disappointments and misfortunes.

The knowlege of these distinctions, if they are true , is not unimportant. Coarse practical men are so puffed up with their own success ; and are apt to use such degrading raillery on unfortunate genius or talent, that whatever has a tendency to set them right in the minds of men,

must be beneficial. So far as the *encouragement* of INTELLECT is useful or ornamental to Society, every thing which tends to *degrade* it ought to be counteracted.

Intellect throws its direction in unseen ways, even upon those who imagine themselves to go on only by the impulse of mere brutal force.

There is a sort of awe and respect which it is necessary for high minds to command, before they can be enabled to exert the influence which it is so desirable that they should carry with them.

If the false stigmas, which the sordid wretches, engaged in carrying on the haphazard game of common life, are so anxious and expert to cast upon them, should succeed, a large portion of Genius would be blighted in the bud; and never advance towards fruit or flower!

It cannot be denied, that there is a species of *serpentine* cunning, which in the world's eye, and for the purpose of worldly ends, is a good substitute for wisdom. This consists principally in deceit, in simulation and dissimulation, in taking advantage of men's passions and follies, by the plausible profession of principle or honourable sentiment, only for the purpose of a lure or trap; and abandoning them the instant they cease to answer some *selfish* benefit.

But such opinions do not deserve encourage-

ment. They lead to every thing which is base. And the mass of mankind are too much disposed by their own mean passions and private interests, to give them every nutriment in their heads and hearts, for which they can find any pretext.

To justify them therefore in theory, to set them up, as entitling those who put them in practice, to deference and high authority, over genius and high talent, — as if these two last were rather for show than use — is going beyond practical abandonment into theoretic depravity; is making virtue a sound; and deliberately and systematically confounding the distinctions of right and wrong!

It must be recollected that these arguments are in answer to those, who make an attempt to decry or diminish the weight of the authority of Genius or high talent; to lessen the primâ facie leaning in favour of the rectitude of their decisions or resolves, or reasonings, or sentiments! — We know that, strictly these ought to depend solely on their own intrinsic strength and truth. — But where collateral presumptions towards the contrary side are set up, it is time to speak out in their defence.

No man ought lightly to be driven from his hold at a late period of life. He has long taken his stand; and probably no other is open to him.

If he is decidedly wrong, indeed, it is never too



late to give away: but others ought to be very cautious; and very sure of their right, before they begin the attack: — no doubtful arguments or plausibilities will justify it! —

At this late period, and where there is no opening for a retreat, it is not in human nature to bear, without a severe struggle, such an effort to destroy one's self-complacence.

Unquestionably Multitudes of human Beings discover, on looking back, when near their journey's end, that they have been wandering in wrong paths. — They are bound to endure their own discoveries, however painful: but it is not to be endured, that they should have the sight of these errors, (still less *supposed* errors,) rudely obtruded on them by others: and it is least of all endurable, if it should happen to be done for private ends; or the gratification of malignant passions!

The common opinion would deem, that there is a superfluity of subtle and over-refined reasoning and sentiment in all this. — Mankind in general, it may be said, are not so very scrupulous and full of solicitude in their latter days: or in any part of their lives.

It may be granted that the mass of society are very much hardened, if not brutalized, in the daily conflict of human necessities, human interests, and human vanities. — But there are great



numbers, who are alive to all the mental disquietudes which I have mentioned. And these are they, to whom the most respect is due; and on whose happiness the infliction of such severe injuries is a flagrant crime.

Sensibility may be morbid: it may be selfish. Its care may be to avoid pain itself! But whence does that pain to *self* often spring? — From regard to the pain or ill doing of *others*! It is not selfish therefore in its *cause*; if it be so in its *effects*!

A good deal is said against sensibility; — and more especially since the time of Rousseau! — But very little skill is used, or pains are taken, to distinguish the *true* from the *false*. — Both are confounded, — the use and the abuse — in one sweeping condemnation!

As far as Genius is concerned, it is quite impossible that any eminent degree of poetical, or moral, Genius should exist without it. — If the senses were not susceptible and vivid, the fancy could never be duly furnished. If the heart were not tender, or active and strong, in its emotions, there would be a deficiency of all just and impressive sentiment!

Poetical or moral Genius therefore could no more exist without sensibility than a fountain without water.

The art and duty lies in the discipline, direc-

tion, and controul of this sensibility. If not properly managed, it cannot be denied, that it may gradually absorb all regard but to its own selfish pains and pleasures: but it then changes its nature; — and becomes rather corporeal and personal, than mental: for surely there is an original corporeal sensitiveness, which belongs to many who have hearts naturally hard; and certainly not softened by time and age.

But persons of sensibility deep both by nature and culture, may have it still ruling over them in all its force even while they may be the cause, both to themselves and others, of great suffering. — If nothing is to be deemed sensibility towards the happiness of others, but that of which the *effects* are happiness to others, we judge by a principle which must throw the frailty of poor humanity into entire despondence! — The will must sometimes be taken for a redeeming virtue, even where it ends in wishes and dreams; leaving the *act* unaccomplished, unembodied, as airy as a passing vapour; — or if effected, productive of an opposite end.

The conscience with regard to others, the scrupulous and anxious desire *to do as one would be done by*, is indeed immeasurably different in different persons. There are a few noble Beings, in whom not only the benevolent feeling is ready to take place wherever the occasion is presented;

but which is not suffered to evaporate in internal emotion ; but is urged in every practicable way into *action*. I have seen one or two instances; but the trying solitudes to which such high virtue is exposed , are almost too great for the human heart! —

There is a sort of coarse practical benevolence, little touched by painful sensibility , which Providence seems to have ordained as more consistent with the fallen state of the ordinary class of mankind. That those operations of Genius, which are occupied in the delineation of the visionary part of our nature, should be assigned as a blessing and ornament to us; and yet that a large portion of those who are warmed and cheered by its beams , should be insensible or ungrateful to the sources whence they derive these enjoyments, may perhaps be a dispensation to hide from them the mortifying sense of their own *native* inferiority.

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11 Nov. 1822.

I am fully aware of the surprise with which many persons view these sorts of discussions, which they call not merely idle, but vexatious. It is not to be denied, that many are not at leisure to pursue them, and many are not found with a capacity to pursue them. But there are others, who have both the leisure and capacity ; and in

whom it seems a desertion of duty not to pursue them. A part of mankind are as much destined for speculation, as others are for mere action. To them, it is not sufficient to go round and round in the same mechanical steps, like a blind horse in a mill.

But all sophistry is detestable; all that kind of artful discussion, which goes just far enough to confound the simple, plain, and true colours of things; and disturbs and *displaces* every thing, without *replacing* any thing. The weapons of discussion should not be permitted to those who have not the talent, the integrity, or the leisure to use them fairly. —

There is nothing which gives one a more despondent view of human nature, than the impression that principle and reasoning have nothing to do with practical life: — that they are mere ornament; well enough for the idle amusements of the closet, but not capable of being brought into use!

If this be true, then this same principle and reasoning become subjects of odium and evil, because they are then the tools for deception and fraud to work with!

If it be said that sagacious common sense hits on right means, and aims at right results, in the conduct of human business, though it may not be easy to explain them by, or reconcile them to,



what is deemed correct principle and correct reasoning, then it must be inferred that man is intended to be governed like brutes, by something in the nature of *instinct* rather than of intellect!

Perhaps it will be answered, that all the objections made to the impracticability of speculative opinions are solely directed against carrying them to unbending extremes; and thereby allowing no exceptions or qualifications.

But this is not accurate; the objections made are to the *general* truth of them: for though almost all principles will allow of *some* limitations; the general rule must be taken to be binding, till the ground of exception is clearly and strictly shewn. Whereas these *practical Solomons* insist upon the presumption being *against* the Sage of abstract Principle; and arrogate to themselves the right of throwing the *onus probandi* on him! Hence they cannot without inconsistency deny, that the position to which they hold is this: that *general reasoning and principles* are to be taken as generally wrong!!! There is another mode of varying the charge against the applicability of general truths, which these practical Solomons sometimes resort to.

They raise a question of prudence and expediency as to *time, place or person!*

It may be admitted, that Truth is not to be

spoken at all times, in all places, to all persons. But the reserve ought to be used very sparingly and cautiously. Sincerity and frankness are in general most beneficial virtues; and the habitual practice of the contrary falls under the odious immorality of dissimulation or falsehood. If this be the foundation of the charge of want of judgment or common sense, it proves them to wish to substitute for them nothing else than heartless, selfish, and dishonorable cunning!

«*Come then*» the Solomons will now proceed to argue «*let us bring all this subtle conflict of plausible argumentation to the only sound test: — the test of experience! What is the sort of sense, that succeeds in the world? Is it not the very sense which the men of abstract and speculative wisdom decry?*»

Admit it: — what does it prove? Why that wickedness is more calculated to succeed in the world, than virtue! — That Deceit will be more prosperous than Integrity, and openness! and that when the Solomons say that a man of high Genius wants that part of Intellect called *Judgment*, they mean that he wants that freedom from conscience which adapts all the means and ends of the understanding to the accomplishment of its own personal and selfish interests!

If it be the effect of high talents, and the noble thoughts which almost always accompany high



talents, to deal with mankind as if they were better than they are; and thus to expose themselves to defeat by placing confidence where it is not deserved, let not this be attributed to a want of judgment; but to the *self*-sacrifice of Virtue! It is the price which Virtue pays; — and the suffering which is to entitle it to part of its rewards! If therefore the frailty of human nature may be forgiven for *wanting* this virtue, it is yet too much that the *possession* of it should be made a charge liable to censure, and which may justify *ill usage*! —

Many things, which may be forgiven, cannot be defended: and he who not only commits errors, but obstinately persists in arguing them to be truths, is much more faulty for the second part of the offence than the first. If he cannot distinguish truth from falsehood, he is an helpless fool: if he defends it in defiance of knowledge, he is still worse!

Hard men go often blundering on, *pig-headed*; and find even Walls give way before them: but if they should be near knocking out their brains at last, what colour have they for lamentation or abuse?

They are apt to mistake their hard-headedness for skill: and therefore encourage in themselves a self-confidence, which leads them in the end to meet obstacles, or snares, or quagmires, which

they cannot overcome. It is quite impossible that these men, who boast of their judgment or common sense, should penetrate into the real lights of steerage, when they come into the wide sea; and when broad daylight fails; and they lose the sight of land. — They know nothing of the internal movements of the human bosom; they have no compass to direct them in unknown seas; they mistake appearances, not of ordinary or daily occurrence: The calm that precedes the tempest they suppose to be the presage of a long continuance of fair weather; and they sport with their position in a blind and rash security. When the storm bursts, they rave, as if Providence had committed treason against their self-delusion! —

If real judgment in the conduct of human affairs be (as I conceive it ought to be) mainly occupied in the double task of deciding the probable course of events under given circumstances, and of choosing the rule of right applicable to such events, then who can possess that degree of intelligent capacity, which is equal to this task, but one who has an intimate insight into the springs of human action? Will it be pretended that these plodding fellows, to whom is ascribed this cool judgment and common sense, have any such insight?

If the opinions, here combated, were merely opinions thrown out in a particular case for a

particular purpose, they might not be worth all this toil of ideas and words to combat them. The obvious partiality of the view that prompted them, might be left to be their sufficient answer. — But they are opinions very extensively, very generally, if not universally, cherished. The cause of this may be that they flatter the popular conceit!

The mass of mankind neither are, nor can be, conversant with abstract principles, and speculative wisdom.

The idle mind, which takes every thing carelessly as it comes; and makes itself the sport of whatever interest, or caprice, or folly, successively throws up in the air, will sneer or smile at all this labour, (or froth as it will call it,) about nothing at all!

But if no one takes any pains to disperse the vapour, or bubbles, they will accumulate and conglomerate at last; till they sit upon the human understanding like a mantle of pestilential darkness!

Let them, who feel no irritation at such prevalence of error, lull themselves in their ease as long as they will! I do not blame them. But if others cannot take it quite so quietly; let them have their own way; and incur no censure for endeavouring to bring forward, what they deem to be truth!

Moral doubts sit upon some minds like nightmares on the breast. There is no breathing till they are thrown off! —

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## CHAPTER LI.

*Active and passive wickedness.*

7 June 1823.

There are a portion of mankind who do not hesitate habitually to commit evil for the purpose of gaining what they deem advantageous to themselves : others only *incur* it occasionally, to escape from some personal pressure or infliction which they suppose still more painful or injurious to them, than the fault into which an overpowering fear drives them.

The former are *actively* vicious : the latter only *passively* so. The former are the demons, who are allowed by the mysterious destinies of Providence to trouble, wound, rob, and desolate society : the latter may be pitied and forgiven, if they cannot be esteemed. Ambition, love of power, of money, of pleasure ; pride ; vanity ; all prompt the restless and strong spirit, which has no conscience, to this *prepcense* wickedness !

Undoubtedly the end they have in view is sure to disappoint them ; and they load themselves

with the guilt without attaining the gratification which they expect. Innocent pleasures, on the contrary, if they fall short of our sanguine hopes, yet leave no sting behind them.

Pleasures at once innocent and refined, such as occupation in the high and unmercenary departments of literature, do not seem to me consistent with habits of active evil. They offer but a remote, contingent, and improbable mode of gratifying vanity; and they procure no sensual good: while they constantly awaken, and retain in a lively state of sensibility, that conscience which makes a state of criminal conduct a state of torment.

Intellect may indeed be perverted to advocate and propagate error; not to seek and develop truth. But then I am prepared to dispute, and, (I think,) to disprove, that *such* an occupation belongs to the *high* departments of literature. Yet as this is a question of interminable extent, involving the most nice and profound distinctions between the uses and abuses of learning, it cannot be entered upon here.

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## CHAPTER LII.

### *Innocent pleasures.*

1823.

Whether we may surrender ourselves to the innocent pleasures which life offers to us; or



submit to uncongenial toils for the sake of that worldly advancement, which good men will seldom attain, is a subject on which moralists may differ; but where the generous mind will lean to the former position.

Let what is called the *business of life* be conducted by men of business :

— « *Coarse complexions,  
And cheeks of sorrier grain* »

will do for that. Those nice apprehensions and exquisite sensibilities which belong to gifted and cultivated talent, those elevated ideas which raise the attention above the petty watchfulness necessary for defence against the wiles of dishonesty and self-interest, are incompatible with the hard adroitness, the immoveable patience and dulness, by which common affairs are managed. To put one above these things, is the best use of riches and birth and station.

On the different destinies and duties of Man, there is a noble sonnet by Milton.

Our state of existence here affords no satisfactory enjoyment, which is not partly intellectual. The pleasure of the magnificence and the beauty of natural scenery would be very imperfect, if it ended with the gratification of the sight. The emotions, the reflections, and associations raised *internally* by these images, are what consti-

tute the great and improving delight of them. To pass one's days in such an application of the faculties of the mind, is a course of happiness which approaches at once to purity and grandeur.

The mind is at liberty in the quiet of the country to examine its sentiments, to pursue its researches, and to digest its observations, undisturbed and uninterrupted. It is by studying ourselves, by turning our attention inward upon those secret movements which we can only know from our own hearts, that we can arrive at a skill in the hidden springs of human conduct. Men engaged in the daily bustle of active life, in the feverish conflicts of society, have neither time nor calmness to examine any thing but that in which they are actually engaged. They cannot look to principles, so as to compare, or generalise; or extend their thoughts beyond the pressing expedience of the moment.

But by the side of all human pleasures, even the most innocent, there lurks some danger. This refined and delicious quiet, these hours of softening and elevating occupation, often enervate us, or render our sensibilities too acute for the necessary intercourse with the world, which the indispensable duties of society impose occasionally on all. The mind ought to have dominion over this material part of us: — but still, that dominion ought to be limited by some coun-

teracting controul from the circumstances to which our existence here is exposed.

Positive happiness is quite impossible in this state of mortality. Goodness itself could not be entirely happy, while it would see so many others miserable.

*« Each has his sufferings : all are men ,  
 Condemn'd alike to groan ; —  
 The tender for another's pain ;  
 Th'unfeeling for his own. »*

### CHAPTER LIII.

*Some fancies delight most in the images of artificial institutions.*

1823.

There are some ingenious men, whose fancies and imaginations are almost exclusively delighted or interested with what is artificial, accidental, and temporary, especially in manners and society; and who do not find sufficient piquancy in the conduct, passions, sentiments, reflections, and reasonings common to our general nature. This was strikingly the case with a man of undoubted genius; HORACE WALPOLE, the *third Earl of Orford*. His powers of combination were skilful and vivid; but they were always historical, feudal, and aristocratical. He was a master of a rich store of

picturesque, striking, clear, well-arranged knowledge, set off by lively sallies of wit, and subtle remark: but it was all drawn from the particular operation of a particular class of the artificial institutions of past times.

His friend and school-fellow Gray, though scarcely less conversant with history, manners, and arts, yet had a genius of an higher kind, to which this knowledge was subordinate. It is true that it formed part of the materials of his Lyric poem, *The Bard*; — but not the most poetical materials: his *Elegy*; and his three great *Moral Odes*, rest all their force upon the images of *Nature*: and this is even still more striking in his sublime lyrical Fragment on *Vicissitude*, in which I do not hesitate to pronounce the following stanza among the most perfect specimens, which the Poetry of any country can produce.

« *Yesterday the sullen Year*  
*Saw the snowy whirlwind fly:*  
*Mute was the music of the air;*  
*The herd stood drooping by:*  
*Their raptures now, that wildly flow,*  
*No Yesterday nor morrow know;*  
*Tis man alone, that joy descries*  
*With forward and reverted eyes.»*

The fancy may be struck with a mighty Gothic mansion with its towers, embattlements, turrets,

and spires : but if it be not at least equally struck with mountains , precipices , deep vallies , forests , seas , and lakes , one is apt to suspect that part of its susceptibility is *technical* , and *factitious* .

There is a quickness of talent , which by early and continued culture may be fanned into a kind of artificial heat , — but which derives no fire from the heart .

## CHAPTER LIV.

*Imperfect thinking is painful ; and requires relief from the light of stronger minds .*

1823.

A large portion of mankind pass their time in a state somewhat between sensation and thought : — a little beyond the first ; but not attaining the last . It is the business of literary genius to help this twilight state into clearness , and to draw forward this intellectual sensation into actual thought .

The brightest minds do not , at all moments , themselves escape from the former of these states . A sort of indistinct , undeveloped pleasure , a succession of indigested , unexamined , thoughts and images , occupies the brain , but makes no distinct impression ; and still less leaves any trace which can be communicated or defined .



Sometimes we are in a disposition of calm indolence, which is content with this half-sensual existence. But there is a spirit within us, which rouses us again, and reminds us that we are intellectual beings; which awakens our curiosity; and will not suffer us to pass unheeded the numerous subjects of contemplation, that solicit our notice.

But weak and faint minds cannot conquer them by all their efforts: they require the lamp of higher capacities to lead them: they need the lines to be traced, and the forms embodied for them. Then, when these evanescent shapes are thus pictured to them, they acknowledge the likeness, and flatter themselves that it is exactly consonant to their own previous perceptions.

There is nothing more painful and irritating than the perpetual alternation of feeble impression and escape or evanescence, with which the faculties of perception and judgment of an half-thinker are harrassed. It is a law of our nature to desire to understand what excites our attention: and so it is inherent in us, (according to our endowments,) to experience some kind of mental movement at most of the objects that strike our senses. When our ideas are confused, and we are conscious of the confusion, we feel a self-abasement, resulting from the evidence of our own incapacity. But a luminous author is a magician

who dissipates these clouds, and puts the dependent reader in good humour with himself.

The charm does not work alone upon the reader: perhaps it has had the same effect upon the author. In the task of enlightening others, he often works his own thoughts out of crudeness into maturity; order, and transparency. Till we bring our conceptions to the test of language, we are not quite sure of our own mastery over them.

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## CHAPTER LV.

«*Woes cluster.*»

1823.

It is a part of our mortal destiny, that misfortune should breed misfortune, and injustice breed injustice. He who can bear least, has most put upon him; and time, instead of counteracting; gives force to calumny. He is like the wounded Deer, which all the rest of the herd attack.

The world always supposes that the chances of rectitude and of wisdom are against him who is unsuccessful. Yet success depends more often upon an adaptation of conduct to the baseness of the world. He who believes mankind better than they are, will always lay his schemes in a way which is likely to be frustrated. *Sir Robert Walpole* was a successful Minister, because he always

arranged his designs on a full conviction of the baseness of public men. *Lord Chatham*, indeed, with a bolder and loftier genius, made his agents, by the fire of his resolves, what he wished them to be.

The good however, who have not *Lord Chatham's* vigour, cannot alter the human character by their own more virtuous principles: if therefore they give faith, where faith is not merited, they become the victims of perfidy and fraud. But who will pity them? The deceiver will have not only all the gain; but all the credit and applause.

In the strange caprices of human affairs even worldly skill will not always command success. But no man does prudently to complain: for if he tells the Public that he is unsuccessful, it will double its efforts against him.

## CHAPTER LVI.

*The development of Genius often accidental and unexpected.*

1823.

Genius breaks forth under the most unfavourable circumstances; and when it is least expected: and it as often disappoints hope, after its future bloom has appeared most encouraging. High responsibility sometimes paralyses effort;

while he, who goes on gradually and calmly, advances imperceptibly even to himself, and attains his strength before he meets with a blight.

But the existence of «*the gem*» (1) that is buried in «*the deep caverns*» of the soul, is frequently unsuspected, till accident brings it forth: and many go to the grave, without a guess on the part of others, or even of themselves, what a treasure they carry thither. There are flames of an early force, which will burst out in spite of all checks and obstacles: there are others, which though bright and powerful at last, are feeble in their origin, and require to be long nursed and cherished and impelled.

Buried genius is always painful to him, in whose bosom it is closed. It seeks for free air; and to be hailed by the cheer of the human voice: it pines to ascertain its strength; and try itself in rivalry with those who scorn or neglect it. Its habits, its morbid sensibilities, all tend the same way as if its powers were acknowledged; yet without the same candid indulgence from the world.

It is quite impossible that the feelings of feverish unvented genius should be calm. The original and most vivid stores of the fancy must

(1) See Gray's famous Stanza, «*Full many a gem*» etc.

necessarily be in proportion to the susceptibility of the senses. The flame therefore *must* be lighted within : and if no opening is given it, must become dangerous.

BURNS, I remember, says, that the discharge of his feelings in poetical composition quieted his tumultuous bosom, which while he was brooding over them was like a collecting tempest. It is an incident to the social part of our being : we always soften our griefs by the communication of them to others. The grief which cannot speak, is despair :

*Curæ leves loquuntur : ingentes stupent.* (1)

It is sincere and unaffected emotion, which is one of the most decisive and indispensable marks of true poetical composition. If the poet does not both feel and communicate it, he fails in the powers of his high calling.

## CHAPTER LVII.

*Fame.*

9 June 1823.

I have cited an hundred times, (but I cannot too often cite it,) the noble passage in Milton's *Lycidas* :

*« Fame is the spur, that the clear spirit doth raise  
To scorn delights, and live laborious days. »*

(1) See the opening of TICKELL's noble *Elegy on Addison*.



The desire of esteem, credit, kindness, praise, is indissoluble from the constituents of our being. But the spur that Milton speaks of, is the spur of a passion which has more extensive aims: which looks beyond the narrow circle of those with whom we associate, and whom we encounter in daily life. It is admitted that merit will not always secure the attainment of it: but then the deeds, to which it has prompted, survive, and are the secret consolation of him who has performed them. The following eloquent and majestic passage by *Johnson* in his *Life of Milton*, is calculated never to lose the power of imparting that glow of emotion, which its first perusal gives to every generous mind.

« *Fancy* (says the critic,) *can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper MILTON surveyed the silent progress of his Paradise Lost, and marked its reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting without impatience the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.* »

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## CHAPTER LVIII.

*Does nobility in England spring from, or does it involve,  
brilliant personal merit?*

4 June 1823.

In England not many great families have been enobled by the merits of eminent individuals; and still fewer, after being enobled, have produced eminent men.

The following have been raised to the peerage by the personal deserts of him on whom the honour was first conferred.

|                 |                               |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Leeds;          | <i>Tho. Osborne.</i>          |
| Marlborough;    | <i>John Churchill.</i>        |
| Dorset;         | <i>Thomas Sackville.</i>      |
| Wellington;     | <i>Arthur Wellesley.</i>      |
| Salisbury;      | <i>Robert Cecil.</i>          |
| Exeter;         | <i>William Cecil.</i>         |
| Camden;         | <i>Charles Pratt.</i>         |
| Bridgewater;    | <i>Thomas Egerton.</i>        |
| Shaftesbury;    | <i>Anthony Ashley Cooper.</i> |
| 10. Nottingham; | <i>Heneage Finch.</i>         |
| Coventry;       | <i>Thomas Coventry.</i>       |
| Oxford;         | <i>Robert Harley.</i>         |
| Aylesford;      | <i>Heneage Finch.</i>         |
| Cowper;         | <i>William Cowper.</i>        |
| Macclesfield;   | <i>Thomas Parker.</i>         |
| Warwick;        | <i>Fulke Grevile.</i>         |

|     |                 |                           |
|-----|-----------------|---------------------------|
|     | Harcourt ;      | <i>Simon Harcourt.</i>    |
|     | Hardwicke ;     | <i>Philip Yorke.</i>      |
|     | Chatham ;       | <i>William Pitt.</i>      |
| 20. | Bathurst ;      | <i>Allen Bathurst.</i>    |
|     | Talbot ;        | <i>Charles Talbot.</i>    |
|     | Mansfield ;     | <i>William Murray.</i>    |
|     | Liverpool ;     | <i>Charles Jenkinson.</i> |
|     | Malmesbury ;    | <i>James Harris.</i>      |
|     | Clive ;         | <i>Robert Clive.</i>      |
|     | Nelson ; *      | <i>Horatio Nelson.</i>    |
|     | Orford ;        | <i>Robert Walpole.</i>    |
|     | Whitworth ;     | <i>Charles Whitworth.</i> |
|     | Eldon ;         | <i>John Scott.</i>        |
| 30. | Bolingbroke ;   | <i>Henry St. John.</i>    |
|     | Torrington ;    | <i>George Byng.</i>       |
|     | Trevor ;        | <i>Thomas Trevor.</i>     |
|     | Hood ; †        | <i>Samuel Hood.</i>       |
|     | Duncan ; †      | <i>Adam Duncan.</i>       |
|     | St. Vincent ; † | <i>John Jervis.</i>       |
|     | Melville ;      | <i>Henry Dundas.</i>      |
|     | Lake ; †        | <i>Gerard Lake.</i>       |
|     | Sidmouth ;      | <i>Henry Addington.</i>   |
|     | Clifford ;      | <i>Thomas Clifford.</i>   |
| 40. | King ;          | <i>Peter King.</i>        |
|     | Grantham ;      | <i>Thomas Robinson.</i>   |
|     | Holland ;       | <i>Henry Fox.</i>         |
|     | Hawke ;         | <i>Edward Hawke.</i>      |
|     | Walsingham ;    | <i>William DeGrey.</i>    |
|     | Grantley ;      | <i>Fletcher Norton.</i>   |

|                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Rodney ; *            | <i>George Rodney.</i>        |
| Dorchester ; *        | <i>Guy Carleton.</i>         |
| Kenyon ; †            | <i>Lloyd Kenyon.</i>         |
| Amherst ; *           | <i>Jeffery Amherst.</i>      |
| 50. Thurlow ; †       | <i>Edward Thurlow.</i>       |
| St. Helens ;          | <i>Alleyn Fitzherbert.</i>   |
| Hutchinson ; *        | <i>John Hely Hutchinson.</i> |
| Sheffield ;           | <i>John Baker Holroyd.</i>   |
| Abercromby ; *        | <i>Ralph Abercromby.</i>     |
| Erskine ; †           | <i>Thomas Erskine.</i>       |
| Linedoch ; *          | <i>Thomas Graham.</i>        |
| Hill ; *              | <i>Rowland Hill.</i>         |
| Beresford (Visc.) ; * | <i>William C. Beresford.</i> |
| Colchester ; †        | <i>Charles Abbot.</i>        |
| 60. Stowel ; †        | <i>William Scott.</i>        |
| Harris ; *            | <i>George Harris.</i>        |
| Oriel ; †             | <i>John Foster.</i>          |

NB. Those with this mark (†) are modern lawyers. Those with this mark (\*) are Army or Navy ; — modern.

Without speaking of the Living, or those very lately deceased, the most eminent of these are Sackville, the two Cecils, Egerton, Ashley-Cooper, Churchill, Pitt, Fox, Yorke, Talbot, King, Pratt, Clive, Nelson, Hawke, Rodney. All these are historical names ; and SACKVILLE at least stands high in literature ; while CHATHAM would have been a literary genius of a prime order, if he had not been a Statesman.

We come now to the eminent men, which families already enobled have produced.

|                |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                  |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surrey ;       | <i>Henry Howard. ( E. )</i>                                                                                                        |                                                                                                  |
| Worcester ;    | <i>Somerset ( M. of W. )</i>                                                                                                       |                                                                                                  |
| Bedford ;      | <i>William ( Ld. ) Russell.</i>                                                                                                    |                                                                                                  |
| Devonshire ;   | { <i>William Cavendish ( D. )</i><br><i>Charles Cavendish.</i><br><i>Charles Cavendish.</i><br><i>Henry Cavendish ( F. R. S. )</i> |                                                                                                  |
|                |                                                                                                                                    | { <i>Charles Sackville ( E. of D. )</i><br><i>Charles Sackville ( E. of M. )</i>                 |
|                |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                  |
|                |                                                                                                                                    | Bute ;                                                                                           |
| Shrewsbury ;   | { <i>John Talbot ( E. )</i><br><i>Charles Talbot ( D. )</i>                                                                        |                                                                                                  |
|                |                                                                                                                                    | { <i>Tho. Stanley. ( E. )</i><br><i>Ferdinando Stanley. ( E. )</i><br><i>Jas Stanley. ( E. )</i> |
| Derby ;        |                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                  |
| Pembroke ;     | <i>William Herbert. ( E. )</i>                                                                                                     |                                                                                                  |
| Denbigh ;      | <i>Henry Fielding. ( Author. )</i>                                                                                                 |                                                                                                  |
| Stamford ;     | <i>Lady Jane Grey.</i>                                                                                                             |                                                                                                  |
| Winchelsea ;   | <i>Sir Hen. Finch.</i>                                                                                                             |                                                                                                  |
| Chesterfield ; | <i>Philip Stanhope. ( E. )</i>                                                                                                     |                                                                                                  |
| Essex ;        | <i>Arth. Capel. ( E. )</i>                                                                                                         |                                                                                                  |
| Carlisle ;     | <i>Charles Howard. ( E. living. )</i>                                                                                              |                                                                                                  |

(<sup>1</sup>) Author of the *Century of Inventions.*



|                |                                                                                                       |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Shaftesbury;   | <i>A A Cooper.</i> (3. <sup>d</sup> E.)                                                               |
| Berkeley;      | <i>Geo. Berkeley.</i> (1. <sup>st</sup> E.)                                                           |
| Jersey;        | <i>Geo. Villiers.</i> (2. <sup>d</sup> D.)                                                            |
| Bristol;       | ( <i>Ld.</i> ) <i>Hervey.</i>                                                                         |
| Cowper;        | <i>William Cowper</i> , poet.                                                                         |
| Waldegrave;    | <i>Waldegrave.</i> (3. <sup>d</sup> E.)                                                               |
| Guilford;      | { <i>Francis North.</i> (1. <sup>st</sup> L. <sup>d</sup> G.)<br><i>Fred.</i> (2. <sup>d</sup> Earl.) |
| Hardwicke;     | { <i>Phil. Yorke.</i> (2. <sup>d</sup> E.)<br><i>Cha. Yorke.</i> (L. C.)                              |
| Chatham;       | <i>Rt. Hon. William Pitt.</i>                                                                         |
| Talbot;        | <i>M.<sup>rs</sup> Catherine Talbot.</i>                                                              |
| Liverpool;     | <i>Rob. B. Jenkinson.</i> (E. v.)                                                                     |
| Orford;        | <i>Horace Walpole.</i> (3. <sup>d</sup> E.)                                                           |
| Howe;          | <i>Richard Howe.</i> (1. <sup>st</sup> E.)                                                            |
| Hereford;      | <i>Rob. Devereux.</i> (2. <sup>d</sup> E.)                                                            |
| Hampden;       | <i>Rob. Trevor.</i> (1. <sup>st</sup> V.)                                                             |
| De Clifford;   | <i>Geo. Clifford.</i> (3. <sup>d</sup> E.)                                                            |
| Byron;         | { <i>Adm. Byron.</i><br><i>Geo. G. Byron.</i> (L. <sup>d</sup> B. v.)                                 |
| Holland;       | { <i>Rt. Hon. Cha. J. Fox.</i><br><i>Hen. Fox.</i> (L. <sup>d</sup> H. v.)                            |
| Lyttelton;     | { <i>Geo. Lyttelton.</i> (1. <sup>st</sup> L.)<br><i>Thomas Lyttelton.</i> (2. <sup>d</sup> L.)       |
| Lovel and Hol- | { <i>John Percival.</i> (2. <sup>d</sup> L. <sup>d</sup> )                                            |
| land;          | { <i>Rt. Hon. Spencer Percival.</i>                                                                   |
| 46. Wellesley; | <i>Wellesley.</i> (M. v.)                                                                             |

It must be recollected that this regards the existing Peerage. Many celebrated men may be

found among the families, which are extinct: such as Lord Bacon, Sir Philip Sydney, Lord Clarendon, Lord Somers, Edward Vere Earl of Oxford, Horace Lord Vere of Tilbury, Robert Dudley Earl of Leicester, William Pulteney Earl of Bath.

The number of eminent persons contained in the two preceding Lists is about *one hundred*: — and of these many must be admitted to belong to a very subordinate class of eminence. The names of Howard (Earl of Surrey,) Sackville, Pitt, Fox, Lyttelton, North, Yorke, Byron, Cavendish, Cooper, Cowper, Wellesley, will always stand prominent.

There is perhaps something torpifying in the operation of rank and titles: — because they secure respect without personal exertion. And who can arrive at mental or moral distinction without great exertion and toil?

It has not happened that they who have given their names to the Administrations of State-Affairs in the station of *Premiers* have always belonged to the first class of Talents. It was not the case with the Cecils, Osbornes, Bennets, Cliffords, Harleys, Walpoles, Pelhams, Butes, Grenvilles, Graftons, Rockinghams, Portlands, Percivals. A few of them held the high post merely in right of their rank and property. Walpole was a singular instance of the power of mere downright solid

and sagacious practical sense. The luminous comprehension and noble decision of Pitt qualified him, in right of native endowment, to take the lead in directing the grand and complex movements of the stupendous machine of Politics, which had grown up in his day. Fox was more subtle, more acute, more refined, more original; but better formed to analyse, and object, than to propose!

The chances are, that a Being of the finest order of mind will shrink from the boisterous struggle, or hollow danger, of the sea of public politics; which allows no moment of rest, nor any indulgence of those nice feelings, or romantic sentiments of honour, that cherish the fountain out of which issue the grander streams of the Mind.

Moderate talents are never wanting to fill with decency, but without distinction, those secondary offices to which birth and property elevate the members of powerful families.

## CHAPTER LIX.

*The matter of literary composition more important than the workmanship.*

10 June 1823.

Few authors place their merit upon the novelty and sterling value of their materials: writers in general rely on the skill of the workmanship. Yet,

if both cannot be had, the first is surely of vastly more importance than the last. It requires more strength and self-confidence than authors commonly possess, to look into life and their own experiences, rather than into books, for the sources of what they put into their literary productions,

It is the destiny of some to live for the purpose of developing the invisible links, that tie the material to the immaterial world.

A clear apprehension, and a good judgment, aided by memory, enable persons, totally deficient in genius, to write not uncreditable books, of temporary interest and use. What they write, however, is almost always drawn, mediately if not immediately, from authors who have preceded them, even though it should have been more directly caught from oral information.

But the highest genius will not bring forth fruit without long and toilsome culture.

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## CHAPTER LX.

*A clear view of our condition. Proper estimate of Riches.*

10 June 1823.

Nothing is more comfortless than to travel the paths of life in a state of blindness of all around us; ignorant of our relative positions; and of the

various duties required of ourselves and others. It is a disquietude, which keeps us in equal anxiety, when we ought to be content, and when we ought to be watchful, and to exert ourselves for a change.

What to desire, and what to avoid, is the prime knowlege in our journey through this bewildered existence. What dazzles us in life, is almost always a delusive light. Calmness, reflection, sedate consideration, and dispassionate balance, of the good and evil of what inflames our wishes and solicits our choice in the passage, is an habit of virtuous and wise mental discipline, which cannot be too much encouraged and assisted.

We ought to learn that rank, dignities, and riches cannot make us happy, unless the mind be duly enlightened and regulated. All the most acute and most permanent pleasures of our existence are equally open to all equality of intellect, independent of adventitious possessions and advantages. If the mighty Noble blazing in his wealth turns with scorn from the simple dress and humble shed of the genius unendowed with territory or revenue, the genius can turn with scorn at least as profound from the imbecillity and hollowness of intellectual gift, or acquirement which that deceitful wealth covers. In the latter case the disappointment is accompanied by something like the disgust one feels at the fraud of false appearances!



There is in titles and riches a tendency to enervate; and to make the possessor content without exertion. But the powers of the mind will not expand themselves without the application of both labour and skill. Some strong impulse is necessary. Of those who already enjoy distinction without pains, how much is the impulse weakened! —

The value of riches would be inestimable, if we knew how to use them. Pope ascribes to the first Lord Bathurst

*« The sense to value riches, with the art  
To enjoy them, and the virtue to impart;  
Not meanly, nor ambitiously pursued,  
Not sunk by sloth, nor raised by servitude. »* (1)

It is a noble panegyric; and was, I believe, justly bestowed. (2)

It does not cost any mighty expenditure of faculties to fill the memory with stores of what others have written or said: but perhaps it requires more than a sound judgment to apply them properly: and how much greater talents still, to originate such as is thus borrowed! —

(1) Moral Essays. Ep. III. v. 219—222.

(2) Allen Earl Bathurst was created a Peer in 1711; and died at a great age, 1775. I know not if he was himself possessed of great abilities: he was a wit: — and it is something to be even the companion of men of genius. —

## CHAPTER LXI.

*Taste abundant compared with Genius: but even Taste not general.*

27 June 1823.

It may be observed that if Genius be rare, and the sensations and emotions of Genius rare, few can sympathise with the pictures of its thoughts and feelings. But if the *active* qualities of Genius are rare, the *passive qualities* are not sparingly bestowed. Great numbers can have those sentiments, feelings, and images, awakened in them by others, which they cannot themselves originate:— just as present images delight and agitate them, which, when removed, they cannot by their own act recall with any vivacity. They can recall them by the aid of others, even in their absence.

These, I presume, are the persons, to whom is, on this account, assigned the quality of *Taste*: — persons of a minor and less plastic sensibility; — but refined, judicious, and well-directed.

Even these, however, are not so numerous as the world wishes to believe. It has been ascertained, since the controul of authority has been a good deal dismissed from the public mind, that the Public sympathises principally with what is coarse, or trifling, or sensual, or extravagant, or

superficial, or erroneous. It loves art for art's sake; and delights in the glaring marks of that, of which the principal merit lies in concealing itself.

In every age has there been a resort to artifice, as a substitute for that Genius, which in every age is so rare. It is the same with *Taste*: they who have not the reality, endeavour to acquire and indulge that which is factitious.

The fruits of Truth and Wisdom, of Genius and of Taste, are unfading and eternal: the fruits of factitious and forced ingenuity have in their very essence the seeds of early death and oblivion.

## CHAPTER LXII.

*The truth of Theory not impeached by occasional instances of the erroneous conduct of its promulgator.*

28 June 1823.

It has been already said, in a former chapter, that what is not practically true cannot be theoretically true. But it does not follow, that he who thinks truly and wisely, always acts truly and wisely. Our passions may blind us in the application of our own wisdom to our own case. Our will may not obey our conviction, and our desires may impell us to run hazards in defiance of our reason.

In the history of Genius and Talents therefore, it has sometimes appeared that men possessed of the most enlightened wisdom, and the most profound reason, have conducted themselves with a folly and imbecillity, of which even common men could not, except rarely, have been guilty. Such were several traits in the life of the illustrious and unrivalled BACON.

Still, he who thinks with elevation, purity, and rectitude, must, where great temptation does not derange his reason, be elevated; pure, and right in the general tenor of the intellectual part of his existence. And let not the cold-hearted and hard-headed flatter themselves that it is sufficient to *act* with an ordinary correctness; which perhaps common sense and common example may shew them to be the path of self-interest! — The mind must also be virtuous and pure: the thoughts must be generous, refined, and intelligent: the heart must be benevolent, tender, and aspiring!

If a strong imagination operates violently on an heart of sensibility; such an heart also re-acts forcibly on a powerful imagination. It is not easy therefore, when these are united in large portions, to avoid those occasional excesses of intellectual delusion, which mean cunning and cautious prudence delight at once to condemn, to ridicule, and to profit by.

Men of artificial minds are not equally in danger of these delusions. Their labours have little concern with the heart: they are executed by that part of the mental faculties, which is called the *intellect*, directing the imagination into whimsical and unnatural combinations.

Nothing, which is not true, — (that is, consistent with poetical probability,) — can proceed from, or affect the heart. No representation of manners such as never existed, nor can exist, can convey instruction; or even any durable amusement. To invent without regard to truth or nature, is as easy as it is misleading.

If Truth did not furnish the same sources of interest, of emotion, and grandeur, as these capricious and improbable inventions; if all the objects of Truth were exhausted, and had become trite, then some excuse might be found for the indulgence in these tasteless whims. But Truth is inexhaustible: its subjects of distinction, combination, and description, exceed the reach of all the variety of Genius and knowledge, which has ever yet appeared; or is ever likely to appear.

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## CHAPTER LXIII.

*Knowledge of what men are, better fitted for success in the world, than knowledge of what they ought to be.*

28 June 1823.

The understanding, which is exercised in acquiring the knowledge of what mankind *are* in fact, is much better fitted to succeed in the world, than that which is employed in discovering and elucidating what they *ought to be!*

Yet the first is commonly debased by its habitual intercourse with those to whom its attention is directed: while the other elevates itself into an higher order of existence by its constant contemplation of what is refined, lofty, and grand.

Never yet was any human Being utterly untouched by the contagion of that, with which he has had perpetual intercourse.

Let us, on the contrary, survey MILTON incessantly brooding, through the days and nights of many a dark and calamitous year, on his immortal task of *Paradise Lost!* All his images and conceptions must have been impregnated with the glory and magnificence of the Creation, on which his mind was occupied! He could only behold Wickedness in its grandeur, its courage, ambition, and openness: — not in its groveling artifices, underminings, frauds, and falsehoods!

Therefore he was left in poverty, neglect, and privation; in an humble and mean state; scorned and trampled on by vulgar Greatness; and uncheered by the voice of Wordly Fame!

The higher pursuits of Genius were never yet pursuits, which led to wordly exaltation: and, I am firmly persuaded, never will be! —

Indignation is the common and perpetually-excited feeling of a noble mind, when it meets with what is base. Yet if it does not disguise this indignation, it raises enemies too numerous to be resisted: if it *does* disguise it, it will soon cease to feel it! —

All history illustrates the success of those characters who have taken advantage of their knowledge of the weaknesses of human nature. Thus *Sismondi* draws with great force the character of *Mattheu Visconti*, (*Le Grand*) *Prince of Milan*, who died 1321. « *C'est par ses talens politiques, par sa connoissance profonde du cœur humain, des intérêts et des passions de tous ceux qu'il vouloit conduire; c'est par son calme au milieu de l'agitation, par sa promptitude à se déterminer et sa constance à poursuivre son but; c'est par son habileté à feindre, souvent à tromper; par son talent pour assujettir des caractères rebelles, pour dominer des esprits indomptables, qu'il s'éleva par-dessus tous les princes de son temps.* » (1)

(1) Ital. Rep. v. 53. See also the Author's *Letters from the Continent*, 1821, p. 133.

## CHAPTER LXIV.

*The same observations applied to literature.*

28 June 1823.

The same observations, which are applicable to the means of success in the world, are applicable also to the means of success in literature. To be popular, it is necessary to conform to the vulgarity of popular taste. In fabulous invention, the characters are most interesting to the mob, which are most like themselves: or which by the most exaggerated degree of extravagance are most calculated to rouse their sluggish faculties. To elicit nice traits in the moral movements of our mysterious nature, is to deal in evanescent distinctions which they cannot perceive. To describe those noble swellings of awakened sensibility, which the conflicts of life are frequently drawing forth from minds highly endowed and highly cultivated, seems to them a sort of bombast, in which there is more pretence than meaning. They consider nothing, which is not familiar and ordinary, to be sincere and real: — and when they deal in what they suppose to be factitious, the more factitious and unnatural it is, the better they like it! —

What is true, and what is dignified, cannot surely be a subject of doubt to any sound mind.

There are moments of sober and awful thought, when we reject all vain affectations, and capricious fancies; when we seek to be acquainted with our nature, such as it is; and to acknowledge no delusions. Then idle mirth, and jokes which do not belong to the real concerns of life, are rejected as false and injurious colourings; and we seek to exercise our imaginations and our sympathies only where experience proves that they ought to be called forth; and where it improves our knowledge and enlightens our reason to exercise them! —

But the multitude of mankind have not by culture and discipline brought themselves to this state of intellect. Thinking is not with them a task: they escape from the coarser occupations of life into the lighter regions of thought, merely for recreation: and whatever is grave, or reminds them of their defects, would be penance; — not amusement!

## CHAPTER LXV.

*The guide of leading minds is necessary.*

5 Feb. 1823.

It is quite idle to assume that the generality of minds do not want guides in the wilderness of thought. Leading opinions are as land - marks,

that point forward, as well as backward. But they want to be perpetually renewed; and perpetually new-pointed.

I search incessantly in great authors, for generalisations, axioms, and broad outlines.

The knowledge of the comparative value of characters, and authorities; of ambitions, and wishes, and stations; and modes of sentiment, and rules of action; is almost as necessary, as it is ornamental and gratifying. Thousands are capable of being taught, who are not capable of discovering the truth.

Sometimes there is a slumbering spark in the mind, which the application of a ray from another's mind draws up into light.

Want of self-complacence and discontent are the results of a partial, narrow, and ignorant view of things.

Rectitude of thinking, and rectitude of feeling, mutually act, and re-act on each other.

## CHAPTER LXVI.

*The beaten path the most happy.*

3 June 1823.

I am inclined to believe that a man would do well for his own happiness, never to quit the beaten path: — but if I admit this, I must admit



that happiness consists in the absence of genius or talents: for genius and talents never did, and never will confine themselves to beaten paths. To examine, explore, and make new efforts, is of the essence of these qualities. In the mean time they incur hazards and disappointments, to which the beaten path would never have exposed them. Yet it cannot be conceded, that speculation, and reasoning, and a resort to principles, ought to be considered as matter of mere curiosity and amusement; and not be attempted to be applied practically.

It is true that the most ingenious, plausible, and apparently conclusive reasoning often overlooks some ingredient or circumstance, which operates practically, and which therefore justifies the opinions which have been taught by experience. But if we were to make no attempts at advancement in knowlege on this account, we should first be stationary, and then retrograde. It is only by repeated deductions from principles, and repeated trials of them by the test of experience, that we can arrive at the numerous profound and deeply laid truths, which amend and exalt our nature. Particular failures are the price we must pay for knowlege and extended wisdom.

Genius, especially in youth, is apt to carry this adventrous spirit much too far for its own quiet or safety. Cunning and self-interest is always

on the watch to urge it into snares: to make it pay the cost, and then to defraud it of the advantages. There is no contending with cold-blooded, hypocritical, Proteus-like artifice.

They, who have no sincerity, whose weapons are simulation and dissimulation, are sure fabricators of their own selfish fortunes; — but they are a curse to society! —

## CHAPTER LXVII.

*Opposition between the speculative and practical skill of Genius.*

28 July 1823.

Either nature implanted in me, or habit and indulgence of fanciful wishes has nourished in me, a strong and wild ambition, united with a sensitiveness and unfitness for the bustle of the world and the roughnesses of contest, which have rendered the success and pursuit of the objects of that ambition at once unavailing and in the highest degree painful! —

There are certain subjects, on which nothing less than the observations of severe experience will correct the generous errors of Imagination. They who are prudent and suspicious in *youth*; are cold and hard-hearted in *old age*.

In the closet, the judgment of a man endued with warm sensibility may operate: because *there* he is in a state of tranquillity. — But long familiarity and custom alone, can enable such a mind to exercise its understanding with due self-possession in the irritation of crowds and the turmoil of action.

A man may be endowed with the powers and principles of strong judgment: but it requires toil, care, and exercise, applied to a particular subject, to enable his judgment to be skilful on that subject.

It always seems a question with the mob, how a man, if his great talents are admitted, could have failed to be successful? — They therefore, cannot, when unsuccessful, have belief in the greatness of his talents! — But for the reason I have given, and for an hundred others, great talents may not be practically successful. —

Nine hundred and ninety out of every thousand men, are men whose talents are made by their occupations: therefore made almost *mechanically*. Such men perform their parts decently; — disgracing nothing, and improving nothing. They take things as they find them: they never think for themselves; and they do, as they are bid! —

Acuteness of mind, and the practical application of it, do not always concur.

A feeble or perverse temper may be connected with a strong intellect : and morbid and pusillanimous nerves with a bold spirit, and with aspiring, adventurous, thought : — while a firm and equal self-confidence is sometimes wanting to the most brilliant talents.

Sometimes young men of ardent, enthusiastic, mental powers have at their early age judgments solid and accurate in speculative points, but erroneous as far as regards the manner of uniting those speculations with realities. The presence of the objects themselves deranges their ideas : and they become unskilful, blundering, confused, and sometimes absurd. As age advances, this liability to derangement gradually subsides: their ideas take that precision and certainty, which can be taught them only by experience and practice; and they become composed, self-confident, and firm.

It may be doubted, how far this uncounteracted inaptitude for society may arise out of accidental circumstances: viz. how far it may arise from a want of opportunity to live in society; and how far from a disinclination and abhorrence to it! —

In some, nothing but age can cure this irritating and tumult-raising effect of Society : — in some not even age can cure it ! — but the major part can be cured by familiarity with society at *any* age.

That knowlege, however, which is derived from practice, will, if it has no foundation in ability, go but a little way.

The calmest mind, the mind of the least feeling, will soonest derive the benefits of experience: but its effects will be the least deep; and its progressive improvement will soonest terminate. That which is *calm* at first, will be *dull* at last. Excessive susceptibility is an obstacle at first; but afterwards the source of all that is eloquent and great.

To indulge high ideas of what men ought to be, misleads and deludes when we begin our intercourse with them: but is in the end the stimulus to impel, improve, and command mankind!

An high imagination, undamped by *proof* to the contrary, exalts the power and the virtue of others. In proportion as the disclosure of the reality lowers our preconceptions, and corrects our exaggerated and romantic estimates, we rise in our own opinion, while others in the same degree fall! — Self-confidence injures him in whom it has no proper base: — but to him who has a foundation to support it, it is of primary use! In proportion therefore as he comes to an accurate knowlege of mankind, his chance of success augments.

All these things shew that genius and talent must always be estimated with due indulgence



for any apparent inconsistency in practice. So many accidental circumstances must concur to the happy and successful development of them, that we must not be surprized that they often fail, where great expectations had been rationally raised regarding them.

Of those men whose talents are of a slow growth, we are apt to suspect the superiority to be the result of labour and acquirement. Genius generally shews incontestible marks of its existence even at a very early age: tho' an intercourse with the world may often for a time overset, or check it.

Very few are so dull and impotent in ability, as not to be capable by the means of toil and industry to master what are called the technical acquisitions of literature. But he who can only do this, can add nothing to the stores of human knowledge.

There is a very wide difference between great talent and great shrewdness. The latter may result from nicety and closeness of observation united to a familiarity with a constant suspicion, and predominant thoughts of evil. Great talent may have exercised itself in what is possible, what is right, and what is noble! — in schemes for the improvement of human nature; and the exaltation of human morals! —

But ability is shewn in innumerable ways, even

where it fails to give worldly wisdom: while plodding mechanical sense often serves us much more effectively in the intercourse with actual life.

## CHAPTER LXVIII.

*Honours of Birth independent of Riches.*

1 July 1823.

Either there is, or there is not a value and an honour in splendid descent. — If there is, it is independent of *Riches*. Otherwise a man's descent may be valuable and honourable to him one half his life: and the same descent valueless and honourless the other half: for he may be rich the first half; and have lost his property the second half! — But if it be contended, that *Riches* only influence the honour and value up to a certain point, then who is to draw the line? who is to determine, where it is to begin and where it is to end? —

That which most rationally is requisite to confer the stamp of value on descent, is *personal merit*. It is from the *personal merit* of the Ancestor, that the lustre is supposed to be derived: and it is in the inference which it raises of the personal merit of the descendant, that the wise will place the weight which they give to it.

If we do not allow Riches justly to confer eminence, how can we reasonably allow eminence to be conferred by a descent from Riches?

Perhaps if Riches be not that which confers the stamp, it may be pretended to be *eldership*, or possession of the title? — Did not then Mr. Pitt derive as much honour from the blood of his father Lord Chatham, as his elder brother the present Earl? —

And how shall we settle the scales of personal merit? Are men to be tried solely by the public stations they fill? by their intercourse with active life?

## CHAPTER LXIX.

*Genius improperly defined by Johnson to be a GENERAL capacity accidentally applied.*

29 July 1823.

What Johnson has said in his *Life of Cowley* regarding GENIUS carries such weight with it in right of the just fame of the author, that, even though it is clearly erroneous, it requires more than ordinary force and authority to produce a confutation of it which shall alter the public opinion; and the more so, because it is a doctrine which flatters the prejudices and passions of secondary minds.

In the course of a literary life somewhat extended, I have always taken every opportunity to protest against this doctrine; and to endeavour to disprove it. It would be tedious to repeat the arguments which I have so often urged: but I am happy to cite the concurrence of a very popular and most able work in the positions which I have always maintained.

*« From the time that Mr. Locke exploded innate ideas in the commencement of the last century, there began to be a confused apprehension in some speculative heads, that there could be no innate faculties either; and our half metaphysicians have been floundering about in this notion ever since: as if, because there are no innate ideas, that is, no actual impressions existing in the mind without objects, there could be no peculiar capacity to receive them from objects; or as if there might not be as great a difference in the capacity itself as in the outward objects to be impressed upon it. We might as well deny, at once, that there are organs or faculties to receive impressions, because there are no innate ideas, as deny that there is an inherent difference in the organs or faculties to receive impressions of any particular kind. If the capacity exists (which it must do), there may, nay we should say there must, be a difference in it, in different persons, and with respect to different things. To alledge that*

*there is such a difference, no more implies the doctrine of innate ideas, than to say that the brain of a man is more fitted to discern external objects than a block of marble, imports that there are innate ideas in the brain, or in the block of marble. The impression, it is true, does not exist in the sealing-wax till the seal has been applied to it: but there was the previous capacity to receive the impression; and there may be, and most probably is, a greater degree of fitness in one piece of sealing-wax than in another. That the original capacity, the aptitude for certain impressions or pursuits, should be necessarily the same in different instances, with the diversity that we see in men's organs, faculties, and acquirements of various kinds, is a supposition not only gratuitous, but absurd. There is the capacity of animals, of idiots, and of half-idiots and of half-madmen, of various descriptions; there is capacity in short, of all sorts and degrees, from an oyster to a Newton: Yet we are gravely told, that wherever there is a power of sensation, the genius must be the same, and would, with proper cultivation, produce the same effects. No, say the French materialists; but in minds commonly well organised (communement bien organisés), the results will, in the same circumstances, and with the same average capacity be the same: there will*



*be the same average degree of genius or imbecility — which is just an identical proposition.* » etc.

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« *There are , beyond all dispute , persons who have a talent for particular things , which according to D.<sup>r</sup> Johnson's definition of genius, proceeds from a greater general capacity accidentally determined to a particular direction ! But this , instead of solving , doubles the miracle of genius ; for it leaves entire all the former objections to inherent talent, and supposes that one man of large general capacity is all sorts of genius at once ,* » etc. *Edinburgh Review , Art. Life of Sir J. Reynolds , vol. xxxiv. p. 83 — 85.*

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## CHAPTER LXX.

### *The value of Independence.*

5 Aug. 1823.

Whoever has lived long enough to have much commerce with the world , must have found from experience , that he who relies upon others places his faith on a weak and failing anchor.

It was under the weight of this painful conviction , that on 7 Jan. 1823 , I wrote the fragment of a Poem , from which the following Stanzas are selected.

## 1.

If the calm wisdom, which in sober age  
 Teaches the mazy paths of life to thread,  
 In youth were ours, we by a gradual stage  
 Should gently journey to our mortal bed!

## 2.

False faith, false hopes, false pleasures lead us on;  
 Till deep entangled in delusion's net,  
 (The moment of escape forever gone,)  
 In lasting chains of ruin we are set!

## 3.

For wild desires, which, when possess'd, bestow  
 Scarce a short moment of uncertain joy,  
 We pay long lingering years of certain woe,  
 Which patience cannot soothe, nor prayer  
 destroy!

## 4.

To catch the favour, that will never come;  
 To win the praise, that is an idle sound,  
 On others' wanton will we fix our doom;  
 And in the yoke of servitude are bound!

## 5.

There is no bliss, but on ourselves depends;  
 There is no mercy in another's heart;  
 No anchor-ground in hearts of fickle friends;  
 No fountain, that will aid in need impart!

## 6.

The feeblest power in hand; (which prudence  
 heeds  
 Too lightly, the most humble wish to fill,)

In true substantial value far exceeds  
 The chance of empires at another's will!  
*etc. etc.*

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## CHAPTER LXXI.

### *Cunning and Selfishness.*

24 May 1823.

Of all men the most heartless and contemptible are cunning men: men «*wise in their generation,*» as the world calls them: men, who care for nothing but as it seems to promote their own private interests.

We could not have implanted in us such a longing after *abstract truth*, but for some good purpose: and such a delight in thoughts and sentiments intrinsically noble and touching! There are minds, to which these are as necessary, as food to the body.

Is there then any use in admiring grandeur and virtue, which we do not practise?

To this it may be observed that some are made for speculation, and some for action: some for matters of use; and some for matters of ornament: some to work; and some to enjoy! — But idleness is not happiness: and forced employment not always misery. Left at our free will, we too often brood on our own evils; or

sink into a languor, which is worse than positive pain.

To suppose it sufficient to be furnished with the knowledge of what is of mere necessity, is mean and groveling. Our animal wants, and the management of a material existence, may be supplied or directed by a very small quantity of intellect. But the selfish think all beyond this to be a waste of faculties, in occupations at best amusing; and generally empty and fruitless.

The glory of self-benefit reflected back from the performance of usefulness to others, is the true and virtuous principle of action.

It is the consciousness of having deserved well of the Public, which cherishes our self-complacency, and enables us to bear with neglects and privations. No one likes to be a cypher: it is a feeling of repugnance innate in the human bosom: The love of distinction is a spring to honourable actions.

But how few can gain real distinction?

## CHAPTER LXXII.

*Busy Novels.*

27 June 1823.

Readers love biography and history, because they seem to teach by experience, rather than

by speculation, and theory. They like to contemplate what is embodied; not what is abstract. They therefore like all incident and character in Tales; not sentiment and opinion. And thus the style and manner of *Werter* has ceased to be fashionable. For the same reason common readers prefer *farces*, and *ballets*, and what is called *stage-scenery*, to regular Plays which address the understanding and the heart; such as those of Shakespeare and Otway.

There is a sort of *ideal* life, which may perhaps amuse, if it does not instruct the mind: something affecting to be the representation of reality without being so: something which enlivens by change and novelty; and refreshes the worn out thoughts: something which is chearful, and does not agitate too much those bosoms, which only want ease.

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### CHAPTER LXXIII.

*In what manner a Poet should write his own Life.*

2 July 1823.

Were a Poet to write his own Life, the reader ought to require that he should state frankly his taste, amusements, and inclinations; his habits, his hopes, and disappointments; the characters, with whom he has been conversant; his own calm



and experienced judgment on the line of ambition he has pursued; and the mode he has adopted of effecting his views; and the pleasures and pains, which life has brought upon him.

The reader would thence judge whether he was a poet by nature or by accident: whether his feelings made him so; — or only his ambition! —

It is the *heart*, operated on by the *Fancy*, which makes a Poet.

The heart thus throws back its impulses on the *Fancy*, and urges it to a *new combination* of its images: — and hence comes *Invention*.

Art then can never make a poet: nor is it at the will and option of the human intellect, whether it will cultivate and attain poetical imagery, and poetical feeling.

No accidental studies nor occupations can change the nature of that original vividness of fancy, and susceptibility of emotion, which is the gift of Providence to the Individual Being.

He, whose *Fancy* is bright and whose sensibility is strong, need not necessarily put his visions and his emotions into language: but till some powerful concurrence of circumstances overcomes his nature, he will always be susceptible of them.

Every one can try his own taste, sentiments, and thoughts by tests which are not capricious.

He can ascertain whether he heartily sympathises with those whom the consent of Ages has decided to be the most noble, the most tender, and the most wise; or with those more common authors whom Fame has placed in a lower station. He can then compare, (perhaps with less certainty,) his own feeble efforts at execution with theirs.

But he may make himself easy, that what were deemed the excellencies of the human mind in former ages, will continue to be so, through all future times. It is not reserved for a late period of society to develop faculties of a nature or a degree different from those which ever appeared before. Such novelty is always suspicious: and, if it attracts for a little while, soon loses its charm.

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## CHAPTER LXXIV.

### *Proper requisites of Tales of Fiction.*

17 June 1823.

ALL Tales should have a strong reference to *unforced human sympathy*: — They should relate to *life*: to what is *possible*, — and *not improbable*, in a state of exalted human virtue and refinement. They should open to us examples of magnanimity, noble sentiment, sublime passion, and splendid wisdom. They should shew the spirit which pervades and elucidates all the com-

plicated machinery and conflicting operations of social ties. — Not violent unreflecting, brutal ferocious passion: — not the mere joy, which arises from the alternation of bodily activity and bodily rest: not the daring heroism of thoughtless ferocity: not the love, which is a sensual impulse; and the generosity which is an unreflecting instinct! —

That, which is consistent with the general scheme of life; which forms a part of its diversified plan; which is, or at least is believed to be, a portion of our nature; which in our sober moments of philosophic reflection we can admit and approve; — ought to form the matter of that highest order of composition, to which human genius can aspire. —

Why should we go to savage nations, and savage times, for those virtues, and that wisdom, which Providence has ordered should alone grow up under culture, mental labour, and refinement?

We are to look in the permanent poets of the first class for the highest lessons of human intelligence: — we are to learn from them the dictates of morality; and the tones of true and virtuous emotion; — we are to hear from them, in language strong, elevated, and harmonious, whence we may draw consolation; and how we

ought to comment on this mysterious state of Being!

But how is this effected by those, who represent an order of things, and a conformation of characters, which no one believes ever to have existed; and of which no one believes the existence even possible?

It is not our business to aggravate the evils of life; but, if possible, to exact comfort from them: to follow out that inspired theory, which is laid down in GRAY'S *Fragment on Vicissitude*: and to shew how Virtue and Wisdom may triumph over Misfortune!

Rage at the destinies of Providence; hatred and fierce revenge in return for neglect or injury; a defying glory in crime, because Virtue is not always rewarded; — may surprise by their boldness; and overcome by the force of the lines, and the brilliance of the colours, in which they are painted. But it is not till the understanding approves, what the imagination admires, that we are satisfied. — When the pause comes; when the sober moment of consideration returns, the charm is dissipated; and we no longer find pleasure in what we know is a delusive picture. —

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He, who has looked on human nature with a sorrowing, sympathising, and affectionate heart; appalled at its vices; touched by its misfortunes, and glowing with affection and wonder at its virtues and beauties, is formed to give a very different cast, and very different interest to his fictions, from him who is defiant, proud, sarcastic, and unsparing; — who would lash the world into the shape which suits the encouragement of his own propensities; who forces his own views by the power of his eloquence upon the reluctant eyes of others; who by the phantasms of his pencil terrifies the beholder into worship! —

All invention must be under the impulse and direction of the affections we have experienced, and the observations we have made: — unless indeed, the affections and observations be supplied by the memory of what we have learned from others; — in which case they will want freshness, force, eloquence, and nature: — they will probably be extravagant or trite: and will neither raise interest, nor give instruction.

What we suppose ought to be; what we conceive of good, separated from the evil, which, in reality, too often counteracts it, a powerful imagination can embody; animate with life; and put into action. To do this, requires something more, it must be admitted, than a vivid fancy: it requires



that fervor and skill of intellectual faculty, which can combine; which can detach, and reunite into one whole; which by presenting it in unity can give to it passions sentiments and opinions appropriate to the new creation! — This pregnant and plastic faculty is the great faculty of genius. It is rare, — especially when the materials in which it deals are, at the same time, of a prime quality; and when the whole is under the direction of a cultivated, sound, and enlarged judgment. —

If half our existence were not intellectual; if we were mere creatures of matter, all care and toil expended in ideal fabrics would be idle, or at best useless. But the employment of our thoughts; — and the right employment of them, — is what our nature and our happiness require. We *must* think in *some* way: — and therefore if we do not think right, we shall think wrong! — All human beings think and feel; in the absence of realities, some visionary representation of them, however imperfect, is present to the mind.

The uncultured mind, therefore, requires to be instructed and led: — food must be found for it: if what is proper is not furnished, it will assuredly take what is improper: — at the best, what is proper can only have a chance against the improper: — but the chance is worth the trial! —

If change of scenery and air be often necessary

to the body, change of thoughts and images is equally necessary to the mind. And how can this be produced so probably and so effectively as by a rich and eloquent fiction? Locomotion is often impossible: solitude is often unavoidable!

## CHAPTER LXXV.

### *Duties of a Biographer.*

5 Aug. 1823.

All exaggerated, and all injudicious, praise is an offence against the public understanding; and an injury to the individual on whom it is lavished. If credit is given to it, it misleads: if it is denied, the denial encourages a scepticism, which will not be confined within its proper limits. What is injudicious, may set up, as worthy of commendation, that which does not merit it: or, by applying to a person what did not belong to him, may raise in others the false expectation of being able to combine what is incompatible.

The qualifications of a Biographer, though not commonly regarded, ought to be of no common class, either in kind, degree, or number. His speculative notions ought to be enlarged and just: his observation ought to be acute, vigilant, and accurate: his faculty of intellectual distinction, nice and sagacious: his sentiments, generous and

warm; his fancy lively; and his command o language clear, and elegant.

To weigh out praise precisely as it is deserved, is to raise edifying examples to those who succeed; and to teach men to rely solely on their proper merits for the rewards they desire.

## CHAPTER LXXVI.

*Distinction between genuine and fictitious enthusiasm.*

26 May 1823.

The exact degree of enthusiasm, which ought to prevail in poetry calculated to be permanent, may not be capable of being defined with entire precision. It ought however to be the enthusiasm of the *heart*; not of the animal spirits. It ought not to be in the smallest degree forced. It ought to be sober, inherent, regular, and constant. It ought to be such as others of sensibility can follow, without being themselves raised to a factitious temperament. It ought to be under the controul of reason, morality, observation, and experience. Its lively colours ought not to be the decoration of Falsehood; but the illustration of Truth. Why should we delight in representing characters, whose whole joy is in doing evil for evil's sake? There is grief and vice enough in the world: — but it is not *all* grief, nor *all* vice!

But when the public taste has been accustomed to these pungent sauces, it feels what is chaste and sober to be insipid. In the end, all excess satiates and palls: but the delirium sometimes lasts a long while. —

The amalgamation of reason and feeling which experience justifies, alone constitutes the beauty of composition. There are sentiments which are a balm in the evils of life; which consecrate woe, and turn it into an half-joy! — These, if they are accordant to our general nature, if they are in unison with the tones of the human bosom, it is the business of the poet and the moralist to embody and enforce. —

There is seldom any enthusiasm in the French-school of Poetry, on which the schools of Dryden and Pope were founded. The best poetry of Q. Anne's reign is flat, and wants vigour and eloquence. PRIOR is never pathetic, though he is sensible and ingenious and witty. PARNEL is natural, easy, and elegant: but he is deficient in terseness and strength; and perhaps in originality. ADDISON, as a poet, is for the most part unimaginative; inanimate, and common place. GAY is colloquial, feeble, and trivial.

There is no doubt that POPE rises on particular occasions to high enthusiasm.

There is a pathetic enthusiasm in TICKELL'S *Elegy on Addison*.

THOMSON is full of enthusiasm as to the scenery of nature: and YOUNG was an enthusiast. SAVAGE had a tinge of enthusiasm upon particular topics. HAMMOND was an enthusiast in love; but without imagination. AKENSIDE was a philosophic enthusiast; — but without moral pathos. SHENSTONE and LYTTTELTON were too deficient in vigour to be enthusiasts.

COLLINS, GRAY, BURNS, were all pure enthusiasts. BEATTIE was an enthusiast, till metaphysics put out the fire. T. WARTON had a kind of technical enthusiasm. COWPER'S enthusiasm was calm, practical, and domestic. — Neither HAYLEY, JERNINGHAM, nor JEPHSON had any conception of enthusiasm.

Enthusiasm is the test of genuine thought or sentiment; — of sincerity, or conviction. He who thinks and feels faintly, dares not trust himself; and always seeks the disguise of some affected and fictitious thought or sentiment. What is strongly impressed upon us, has too much dominion over us to allow us to doubt. Variety and Affectation are commonly the result of want of self-confidence. A false colouring is attempted as a substitute for weakness and sterility. —

All apparent technical labour and skill in composition is inconsistent with that tone of enthusiasm, which must seem sincere in the Author, before it can communicate real enthusiasm to the reader.



Enthusiasm moves rapidly onward : it cannot stay to examine , and polish , and attend to minute accuracies. Mere propriety goes but a little way in reaching excellence.

But it is this , perhaps , that so often disqualifies enthusiasts for execution ; and causes them to leave the communication of public fruit to those who are their inferiors in the higher qualities ; but who are better *artists*. Hence the field of Glory is left open to mediocrity ; and a large part of the compositions circulated and handed down are better fitted to the approbation of mechanical critics , than of a genuine lover of the Muse.

It is fear of ridicule which extinguishes enthusiasm in a large portion of those in whom it is implanted : constant intercourse with the world , and the desire to appear like other people , polishes away all energies. The laugh , the sneer , the sarcasm , are the weapons of society : and the *nil admirari* is the prime rule of what is called good company.

They who behold men only in active life , see nothing but a coarse selfishness : a cold disregard to all interests but their own ; a watchful calmness , never off its guard , and always ready to take advantage of others ; and a total scepticism as to any other motive of action than individual good. All ideal gratifications ; all benefits , which

are not matter of substance, they deem empty and affected ; and they consider it a sort of visionary folly to place any sincere value in them.

But all good poetry deals almost exclusively in these *ideal* pleasures : and deals in them as things in which it believes , and not as mere matter of ornament , and pretence.

It is the *belief*, which is the true ingredient that gives force to the charm.

*Reality* is more rich and captivating than the most extravagant romance, if the associations which coexist with it in high minds are joined to it. It therefore can never want grandeur, or pathos, or beauty, or interest. But to survey it only by the tests of the dry philosophy of dull minds, is to strip it of all its prime attractions.

There are certain principles infixed in the structure of the human intellect and human bosom, according to which the imagination and the feelings pursue their natural and almost involuntary course ; — with more or less vigour and brightness according to the degree of native endowment of the individual. To rouse, kindle, and direct these, is the poet's business !

We ought to combine with the proper objects of fancy such intellectualities, as are not only ingenious and plausible, but virtuous and sound. — All trickery ; all desire to raise wonder, and gratify by a momentary novelty, ought to be

avoided. There is enough Grandeur and Beauty in Nature, without resorting to extravagant invention.

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## CHAPTER LXXVII.

*Traits and consequences of the enthusiasm of Genius.*

15 July 1823.

Enthusiasm always accompanies high Genius ; which seems destined to the nice and difficult perception and development of the ties and links between the material and visionary world.

But it is this enthusiasm which so often, in practical life, leads wrong him who is under its influence. When he applies it to realities, when he believes it will be found in action, he will be a victim to his faith.

In some men Genius expands, as if by bursts of inspiration, in early youth, many years before it diffuses itself over the whole character and actions: so that the gifted person appears to all common observation, deficient and foolish. Nothing but his own self confidence, and knowledge of his own internal resources, preserves in such cases the respect of others towards him.

But Genius is never ignorant of its own powers, even when they are totally hidden to others. Eagerness, vanity, shyness, tumultuous feelings,

often make it appear imbecile or absurd to others, when the possessor is sufficiently sensible of his own internal strength.

But the majority of mankind, who are foolish in action, are still more foolish in the closet.

Genius is known under all its disguises, awkwardnesses, and eccentricities, by a thousand traits; — by some burst of forcible sentiment; by some unexpected nicety and novelty of distinction; by some image, or struggle at an image, romantic and grand; by never dealing in common-place, but giving constant signs of an unborrowed course of thinking.

Yet to vulgar apprehensions men of Genius often appear in their youth very inferior to men of ordinary acquirements.

What *is* Genius, can surely admit of no rational doubt.

Strong, just, and noble Imagination, displaying itself in visionary *invention*, *must* be Genius! —

If we could suppose a man to exhibit this, who seemed dull in learning, barren in acquirement, and blundering in the common intercourse of life; still from the proof of possessing this faculty we must admit his Genius.

It is in the register and discussion of these particularities and inconsistencies, that the great value of the biography of Genius lies. We want to have the picture drawn with truth and frankness.

The mere relation of the events, which are common to all men, unaccompanied by the notice of the peculiar manner in which they affect Genius, is as dry and uninteresting as it is unamusing.

We know that all are born, and die, and eat, and drink, and sleep. We want to know, of Genius, the prevailing temper, and passions; the voluntary occupations and amusements; the private sentiments; the sincere convictions; the unaffected taste; the natural predilections; the judgment regarding its cotemporaries; the opinion of its own faculties and deficiencies; — its hopes and fears; its ambitions; its comforts; and its sorrows.

The generality of mankind have no fixed and absolute predilections of sentiment and thought. They take what is taught them by others; and are therefore always liable to have it changed by the last master. It never sits upon them uneasily or inconveniently: and can always be thrown off whenever it is in the way. Men of talent, therefore, without genius, can always accommodate themselves to the world: — because their feelings, and impressions, are not inherent, but borrowed.

There are invisible charms attached to the whole scenery of nature, which it is the business of the poet to decypher, like an unknown language! It requires a rare native penetration and brightness of perception to effect this. The im-



pression on common minds is faint, confused, and too dim to be traced: — and that which is taken at second hand from other painters, is of no real value.

In proportion as a mind is pleased with the lively description of a temporary state of artificial manners, it has no taste for the simplicity of nature. This is the characteristic of the French above other nations of modern Europe: they are more struck with art than nature; and have more of the ingenuity of the understanding than of the heart. They are always great admirers of their own temporary manners: and assimilate the costume of all ages and people to their own prevailing fashion. In the time of Louis XIV. therefore they made Romans speak like the *petit maîtres* of their own existing Court. They are always justly called reasoners in poetry, rather than dealers in the higher flights of Imagination. The understanding works more with them than the lofty enthusiasm of the fancy and the heart. They have a keen talent for observation; and a lively sense of the ridiculous. They are therefore more shrewd than sublime; and more lively than pathetic.

They whose main talent is fitted for, and exercised in, quick and nice observation of what is daily passing in society, accustom their minds to what is mean and little, rather than what is great;

and suit their conceptions to what is familiar, selfish, and coarse.

This minor sort of Genius is more the result of study and art, than the Visionary and Sublime.

But how many more readers does it please! — Nothing delights them like pictures, which they call drawn to the life. — But surely, the pictures ought in themselves to be beautiful, or grand: — we ought not only to have the truth; — but sublime or affecting truth.

It may be said that the exhibition of those comic scenes, those little drolleries and raileries, which enliven society, cheers the heart, and nourishes charity and benevolence towards mankind: that portraits of severer virtue, and nobler impulses of intellect, are such as the mass of the people have little sympathy with; and can derive no practical lessons from: that what is matter of lively and accurate observation is more rational and solid than what is matter of ideal and baseless invention; and that a sagacious understanding is much more worthy of admiration and praise, than a wild and speculative imagination.

Thus the admirers of *Fielding*, in preference to *Richardson* and *Rousseau*, were always found among the sober and busy part of mankind.

But it may be observed that this alledged truth of portrait is very commonly a mere assumption. Pictures are not necessarily true, because they

are familiar and coarse. I doubt if any of the characters in *Tom Jones* are particularly true to nature: the prevalent introduction of the familiar manners and habits of the day deceived readers; and made them mistake costume and accidental habit for universal features of society.

Are books not to be written but for the common reader? Is the judgment of a common understanding to be the test of excellence? —

## CHAPTER LXXIII.

*Different sources of the different characters in poetry traced.*

14 July 1823.

As to what belongs to a Poet to do: — he may delineate his own feelings, if they are peculiar, forcible, striking, and just; — or those of an invented character.

The former will have the best chance of being accurate and profound.

Some have a lively invention: — but more ingenious than just; which enters not into the depths of the human heart; but only takes things as they appear upon the surface. Some are under the constant dominion of high passion, which deepens imagination in proportion as it is strengthened by it.

Some are poets in their own lives and feelings: others, only in their ideal creations.

It follows from hence that the memoirs and characters of those poets are most interesting, whose *own personal* experience furnishes them with the subjects of their poetry. All else sits *light* upon them; and is often wanton, capricious, and extravagant.

A great poet's mind and heart are the mirrors, whereby the noble dreams and visions of the Intellect are to be reflected back upon the world.

All voluntary movements of the imagination find a ready sympathy in other minds: those which are the result of effort and toil, have a peculiarity in them, or take an accidental course, for which other minds are not prepared.

Why is it expected, that Genius, from whose higher sensibility all its powers of delight are to arise, should yet possess all the common-place coldness and complacence of those, who on this very account resort to borrow warmth from their fire?

It is the disquiet at ordinary things, and the agitation at the sorrows and difficulties of humanity, which swells the heart of genius till it vents itself in poetical effusion.

One hates the unnatural and stupid boasts of that cold heart, which only feels or pretends to

feel according to the dictates of duty or chill reason.

What men are *by art*, can never excite much interest, or afford much instruction. What is done by toil the next man's toil will supersede: the strokes of nature have a positive and unalterable value.

There is a dim idea of beauty and excellence beyond reality, which lies at the bottom of our hearts. The magical powers of the poet make it burst its searments, and blaze into light. The outline of similar forms seems impressed upon all: or at least the poet's power turns them into similarity.

To represent what is common can surely afford but a very vulgar pleasure. What we see every day in life, we do not want to be taught. But what is worse, these representations are very generally vulgar, yet not correct. They paint things according to the blundering perceptions of dull and uninformed minds. And yet even these coarse, shapeless, unintelligent, pictures give pleasure to the multitude of uncultivated readers; because they bear some similitude to what themselves are accustomed to conceive of the same subjects.

When a young lady of more memory than genius, more liveliness than depth, more quickness than examination, writes a Novel, she betrays in every page the trifles with which her



mind is full; and the tests of value, which she applies to the events of life.

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## CHAPTER LXXIX.

*What are just claims to public notice.*

10 May 1823.

It is quite impossible that any one can have a just claim on the public notice, except in right of qualities and exertions which are of a public nature. Birth, rank, riches, are mainly personal and private. Propriety in moral conduct does not extend its effects beyond the circle of individual intercourse.

Any extraordinary effort of mind communicable to all the world, excites an interest in all the world towards him from whom it proceeds. But still nothing is worth telling which is not applicable to others, either as instruction or amusement.

A life of study is not always an happy life: it often destroys health, and depresses the spirits. But yet the mind, that has vigour, requires exercise, as well as the strong body: and the faculties, which lie useless, stagnate and breed diseases.

There are times when we desire to know the thoughts of others; and other times, when we are anxious to digest and perfect our own thoughts. As we grow older, we read less, and think more.

It then becomes necessary to recur to the thoughts of others;— not to give foundation to our own; but only as elucidatory or confirmatory of them.

The external scenes of nature produce very different effects upon the senses of different people. With some, they form vivid impressions on the fancy, mixed up with the rich stores of intellect and sentiment. To reflect back these by the means of adequate language, is to afford aid and illumination to feebler minds.

It has always been my desire to prove that, of which I have always felt a perfect conviction; — that poetical feeling is not a *pretence*, but a reality. — Most men feel too little; and a few, too much!

All seek their pleasures: but some seek virtuous, or innocent pleasures; others, selfish and corrupt ones. The pleasure derivable from instructing or amusing others, is a virtue. — We cannot love virtue without being in some degree virtuous.

A genius does not in early life accommodate himself to the world, like one of less predominant and fixed propensities. — As experience and necessity gradually bring him into closer contact with society, he approaches at last nearer to this ease and pliancy: — but it is then too late to serve him with the world: and he cannot in such advanced days begin a course of ambition

which his superior abilities might, if commenced earlier, have rendered easy to him. —

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## CHAPTER LXXX.

### *Dangers of Imagination.*

16 June 1823.

Imagination, though the most brilliant, is the most dangerous of all the mental faculties. It often leads us to pursue *Will-o'-Wisp*s, — *ignes fatui*, — till we fall into quagmires and pits. It makes us reckless for ourselves to the darkness and tempests around us: — and reckless also for those dependent on us, who possess not our charm to keep off the pain of the actual evils which are present to us.

It is often urged, that if we did not rely on this cup of delirious comfort, we should make more struggles to avoid misfortunes, which might be kept off by caution and prudence.

Men of imagination live upon circumstances as they appear to themselves; — not as they appear to *others*. They who live by bare dry facts, live by one common standard: they do not substitute what is ideal for what is actual: and when evil comes, they see it only as evil. Fame, the most airy and unsubstantial of all the objects to which Imagination gives colours, yet is an object for

which nature seems to have implanted in us a strong passion. The history of mankind proves how many solid advantages have at all times been sacrificed for the attainment of it. If it exists even in those, who have little imagination, is it extraordinary that it should flame brightly in those who have a strong imagination? —

To love glory before profit, is to make the intellectual part of our nature predominate. — It is the source of all that is unselfish and generous. We can have little other reward than fame and self-satisfaction for our noblest actions. Money does not pay us for facing death in the fields of battle. The work, the toil of half a life, which secures us immortality, does not pay us in money! —

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## CHAPTER LXXXI.

### *The Vision of Poetry.*

Having entered into numerous discussions regarding poetry in my former Chapters, I may be allowed here to borrow some description of it from my numerous loose poetical fragments. It is part of an Ode, written at *Naples*, 20 June, 1820, entitled







To do otherwise, is to make *Poetry* the mistress or hand maid of Error!

All which raises Pity in false places; all which makes Vice appear beautiful; all which encourages those delusive appearances of pleasure, which the first appearances of the fancy are apt to derive from a thousand objects of life, cannot be admitted among excellent poetry; — because it wants a primary ingredient of excellent poetry: — *truth*, and *wisdom*.

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O Nature, lovely Nature! but to thee,  
 I lift th' adoring eye, and bow the knee!  
 I scorn th' unholy, coarse, factitious fire,  
 Which wakes with clamourous notes th' unwilling  
 lyre!

Only where thou with voluntary glow  
 Bidst the heart's melted current freely flow,  
 I wait to catch thy wafted music's voice,  
 And in the truths it tells, alone rejoice!  
 Exhausting raptures, charms of dazzling glare,  
 Which shine to draw astray, then melt in air,  
 Ne'er, sung by thee, delirious pleasure breathe;  
 Nor tempt the Poet with a dying wreath!  
 Fresh as the waters of perennial life,  
 Flow thy clear streams of song mid human strife!  
 Untouch'd by time, unclouded by the change

Of transient taste, thy strains of music range  
 Upon the wings of the eternal Year;  
 And fresh, as when the world began, appear!

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### CHAPTER LXXXIII.

*What are called the prejudices of a native sagacity, are generally verified by time.*

17 July 1823.

I am one of those who feel no particle of doubt in the conviction, that whenever we give up what natural sagacity and plain reason suggest to us, we are sure to go wrong, and repent of it: *that is*, we may reason *a priori* with a correctness approaching as near as possible to *certainty*! But, unquestionably, it is still more satisfactory to have the test of *facts*, to resort to, as a guidance.

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### CHAPTER LXXXIV.

*Successive ductility and firmness of highly-gifted minds.*

All sensitive minds have a tendency to suspect themselves. They are at first alarmed by objections; and examine with some anxiety whether the charges against them may not be true! That

ductility, which yields to be led by inferior minds, is not uncommon even among the highly-talented! But if once talent is roused, and provoked to investigate its own opinions, this temporary weakness is put aside; and the more it is pressed, the firmer it becomes!

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## CHAPTER LXXXV.

*Opinions of unprincipled worldlings.*

19 July 1823.

There are a numerous class of mankind, who entertain the belief, that there is so much uncertainty in the conclusions to be come to, and the judgments to be pronounced in human affairs, that a superior degree of ingenuity and management, with the mixture of a little sophistry, may turn the balance either way, as desires or interests may prompt.

But they who think so, entertain a false confidence, and a false belief! They may succeed, and *do* succeed, too often, when they have weak people to deal with! But when once the question is fairly raised, they will have an hopeless and hazardous contest!

There are others, who will enter into no argument: but rely entirely on bodily strength, and animal courage: on the manœuvres of per-

sonal solicitation and secret misrepresentation; on private assertion, where there are none to controvert; and private insinuation where there are none to contradict!

I make due allowances for the natural tendency of the human mind to delude itself into opinions accordant with its wishes or interests! Certain colourings and exaggerations may be expected and forgiven! But the outlines and main colours of the things themselves cannot be reversed, or changed! *Black* cannot be made *white*; and what is *crooked*, cannot be made *strait*!

When such attempts are successful in defiance of the conviction of him on whom they are successful, because the conceiver is desirous to gain the good will or good word of him to whom he makes the concession, the conceiver falls into a most grievous delusion. Such a recompence, (were it worth having,) was never yet gained in this way! No man feels kindness, or gives praise, to him whom he has deluded!

It is admitted that it is very long, before a generous mind can be fully impressed with these severe truths!

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There are many principles, rules, and doctrines, which ought not to be admitted to be brought into debate. To suffer the question to be



entertained, is to encourage those, who are adventurous enough to try any thing which their interest prompts, to persevere in those efforts which ought to be crushed in the bud.

There is no glaring fact, (as indisputable as that *two and two make four*,) which will not be disputed, if it be left to a man's conscience, and sense of shame, whether he will dispute it, or not!

## CHAPTER LXXXVI.

AKENSIDE, *and didactic Poetry.*

6 April 1823.

AKENSIDE, with a mind more rhetorical than close, sought out a metaphysical subject, on which he might hang all his profusion of ornament, and endless amplitude of illustration. He seems to have delighted more in the splendor of the dress, than in the merits of the matter which it covered. He never deals in those vigorous or nice touches, which move by their force, or enchant by their just and happy precision. He has no concentrated strength: he exhausts by expansion.

To a genuine lover of the Muse it is difficult to give much interest to DIDACTIC poetry. That, of which the primary object is *preceptive*, has in it

something almost incompatible with the first principles of poetry. Among the Ancients indeed *Lucretius* has set an example of this sort of composition. AKENSIDE had only to throw into a poetical form the prose essays of *Addison* on this subject. I think that his ideas seem to have been almost all *derivative*; and to have been more upon his *memory*, than upon his *heart*.

His poem exercises the mind with variety: but he never rouses the intellect, or moves the feelings. It is the enthusiasm of a mind heated with study, and fermenting with the richness of the fruits it has gathered. It partakes too much of the air of philosophic discipline for the erratic visions of a poet's taste.

AKENSIDE, however, striking out a composition, which was considered to have had, (perhaps justly,) a new character, gained by it immediate and extensive celebrity.

Without *novelty*, there are scarcely any instances of the acquisition of popular fame.

## CHAPTER LXXXVII.

*The proper criterions of original thinking.*

9 April 1823.

I call ORIGINAL those opinions, which result from the operations of an Author's mind upon

his own experience. That which he draws from his memory of what others have said, and which he repeats because he supposes it will raise the reader's estimation of his talents, or his morals, is worth nothing. It is a false coin, which is mischievous, and ought to disgrace the utterer.

But original, as well as borrowed, opinions are worthless unless they are just. And how shall we determine their justice? Time and the concurrence of other good judgments must determine it. If a man frankly utters, what he sincerely thinks, he will be generally right; or he is not fit to be an author: for it is no qualification, to be able to avoid error, so long as a guide is followed.

But then it may be said, that though he ought to write only what he thinks, he should not write all he thinks: that he should only shew his best face; and not be seen in dishabille! — But are we to judge of any one by such partial appearances? It is from the knowlege of a man's character, *as a whole*, that we receive instruction!

A man gains nothing by impressing a falsely-favourable character of himself: it cannot last: and if it could, it would be of no benefit to him. «It is not my own portrait» says Montaigne, «that thus gets favour: it is the portrait of another.»

Absolute freedom from affectation is a primary ingredient of genius. The effects of art, management, and reserve, are cold and lifeless. They are like the chill light of the Moon; that shines, but does not fructify.

We talk of caprice of opinion. There is no caprice of opinion among the highly-endowed, and highly cultivated. It is with the multitude, that opinion is capricious. Look through the great writers of all ages and nations; and the conformity of moral conclusions, and of the sentiments of the heart, is miraculous.

If there be novelty in moral or sentimental thinking, we may be sure that it is wrong: Providence has not ordained that truth in morals, or in the movements of the heart, should first be discovered at the end of thousands of years.

There is in the human bosom the same perpetual principle of moral truth; and the perceptions of the senses, and the processes of the understanding, make their way to it in the same manner.

The fashionable principles of poetry therefore in England, which have for the first time been set up in the present Century, may be concluded to be utterly wrong, for that reason alone, were there no others. There are however others, sufficiently numerous and incontrovertible. It is a miserable perversion of mind, which renders

all the accumulated instruction and delight of multiplied ages distasteful and insipid.

It is the certainty of knowledge derived from the arguments of illustrious men at different eras and under different circumstances, which gives to it its greatest satisfaction. The moral, biographical, and historical literature of England alone is somewhat dry, and barren: it is by combining with it those of Italy and France that its inexhaustible attraction continues to augment upon us. Why should England suppose that it engrosses all genius, all wisdom, and all virtue? It partakes them but in common with other countries.

Authors must be tried by the fertility, the force, the sagacity, the accuracy, the brilliance, the eloquence, the moral feeling of their minds: — not by a little technical skill; by laborious correctness, and mechanical method.

It is by degrees that the mind arrives at that self-confidence, which enables it to rely on its own impressions; and to draw from these only sources of true intelligence; rather than to found theories on imperfect observations of hidden movements; which exhibit false lights, only to mislead.

What is written in youth, is generally ambitious: what is written in age, is the mere vent of fullness of the mind. The first is more blooming, and shewy: the second, riper and mellow.



We do not continue for any length of years to load our memories, without bringing what we collect to the test of the judgment. We separate what our experience confirms from that, to which our anticipating fancy alone had given weight. —

The works of young authors therefore are but rarely of substantial texture: the ingredients are commonly light; and the combination wants flavour. Even the imagination, which is supposed to be more restless and glittering, is not so deep and strong. The judgment, as it grows more paramount, prunes it of a good deal of foliage and blossom; but it thus shews the real fruit to more advantage.

He who can pass through the vicissitudes of a life prolonged to middle age, unimproved by practical testimony, must be deficient in common perception and the most common understanding. How much more strongly must this apply to those of great mental gifts! The difficulty is to find proper channels of communication; to find occasions for pouring out this knowlege.

What is *new* will probably be lost, if it waits till entire dissertations proper to each subject, in which it may find its regular place, can be executed.

There are, however, men who have given over literature before their middle age: but I doubt, if they could be men of native genius, or native

talents. What a man thinks strongly, he will not be content till he speaks, or writes.

I am not sure that the life of an author is an happy life: but yet if the seeds of authorship be in him, he will not be happy except in the indulgence of this occupation. Without the culture and free air which these seeds require, they will wither and turn to poison.

### CHAPTER LXXXVIII.

*The voice of the multitude not the test of merit.*

9 April 1823.

It is quite impossible to secure Fame by legitimate means, though it often comes by those which are illegitimate. — It is therefore a duty to repress any anxious desire for it. If it comes — well: — but if it keeps aloof, let it go! — It is sufficient to have deserved it. Horace therefore says strangely,

*Paulum sepultæ distat inertie  
Celata Virtus. —*

Of all the absurd positions that can be laid down, there is none more absurd than that the voice of the multitude is the test of merit. *An quicquid stultius quam quos singulos contemnas, eos aliquid putare esse universos?* (1)

(1) Cicero, *Tusc. Quest.* l. 5. c. 36.

If the multitude are guided by their own individual judgments, which is the privilege now claimed and exercised, we may guess what those judgments will be! — He who levels himself to vulgar apprehensions, vulgar feelings, and vulgar language, must be necessarily more popular, than he who is above them.

As to prejudice, — that is certainly prejudice, which merely rests upon authority; and for which there is no apparent reason. But a large portion of the opinions received and handed down to us by men of eminent genius or talents, have a foundation as rational as it is ancient.

Mankind were much happier when they thus had resting places for their thoughts, instead of throwing every thing into doubt and disorder.

Yet Truth need not vex herself: she will have her day again and again; while Folly once rejected never revives; — but becomes rotten and odious: some contemptible progeny may spring from her ashes; to flourish for a moment; then to be treated as they deserve.

## CHAPTER LXXXIX.

*What constitutes the value of Fancy.*

10 April 1823.

THE value of a fancy is little, till it becomes aggregated with the operations of the mind.

Therefore he, who passes through a succession of beautiful scenes, does not arrive at their value and use, till time and leisure give him an opportunity to contemplate upon them.

He whose opinions merely arise out of the occasion, and are only applicable to it, cannot transfer the results of his mind to another, because he cannot be able to relate precisely all the facts and circumstances attending it.

He, whose mind is pure, does not fear to put it upon paper, where he will find a permanent monitor of what is wrong. But the imaginations and thoughts of many are cloudy and dark; — arising not merely from faint perception, but from evil passions.

We must not force our thoughts into perverse and unsoial routes; but rather watch and follow their native excursions. That which is common to our nature, and at the same time virtuous, can alone interest and instruct us. We quit these perverse paths, as soon as they have lost their novelty. We take up things as passing visions, to be contrasted to the similitudes of real life; but which we cannot endure as systems.

It is difficult to guess, why, while the paths of beauty and grandeur and health and instruction are unexhausted, and some of them untraversed, human faculties should waste themselves in seeking error thro' roads crooked and monstrous, and difficult and wearisome! —

Habit may reconcile an individual to *any peculiarities* of mental combination. How can the picture of such peculiarities interest those who have not contracted the same habits? Or can he justify the attempt to encourage these habits? Yet it will be said that the delineation of these peculiarities is often found to *please*. — Why? — Merely because it is *new*: whereas it pleases the *author*, because it is *habitual*!

There are two degrees of *Invention*: one is *discovery* only; — the other *creation*. We may discover what exists; but which has hitherto lain hidden. We may *create*: but we are bound to create with a regard to *probability*. —

In the first class we may associate sentiments, moral principles, and reflections, to a simple fancy: in the last class, there is the complex operation of the imaginative combination, and of the creation of the intellectualities appropriate to such new existences. This is not a mere discovery; nor even a simple creation; but a *double* creation! —

There are among human Beings, those who are born with noble capacities, and generous hearts: but there are too many, who are deficient in both these qualities. —





## CHAPTER XC.

*The purity of the mind, and the rectitude of the motive determine the merit of the action.*

11 April 1823.

Without purity and elevation of *mind*, no man can be good or great. Useful things effected through bad motives, (if they can be so effected,) confer no just honour upon him. It may be said, that a man's *mind* is only to *himself*; and that the world can judge by *actions* alone. But the mind is an index to the real character of the actions: and to know the mind, therefore, is to have the best clue to the proper judgment of the actions.

We are not sent into the world to pass through life with the misty and incurious apprehension of brutes. A thousand invisible as well as visible objects are about us and around us, and solicit our internal meditations, as well as visit our senses. Mere material action is but a small part of the duty involved in that which it is the task of our Being to perform.

But common capacities want every light and guide to assist them in this more shadowy and mysterious part of our nature. Nay, the finest minds cannot always follow and render permanent the effects of these passing gleams, without the exertion of long skill and practice.

It is a perpetual watchfulness of one's own internal movements, a study of SELF, <sup>(1)</sup> that can alone give this skill. This is the only source, that is open to him: all else is veiled or disguised.

If this be true, there is no subject on which an author can produce information so important and so profound as on SELF, if he treats it with ability and candour. But he must take care to dwell on what is applicable to others, as well as to Self: he must mix up little of what is adventitious, and which does not spring from our general nature.

Every man derives a satisfaction from knowing the ground on which he stands; what are his pretensions; and on what he can rely. Whatever we can rescue from the caprice of incapable, imperfect, or inconsiderate opinion, is a valuable step in our progress towards complacency. The conflict of light or prejudiced opinions; the uncertainty into which the multitude, sometimes from ignorance, and sometimes from design, attempt to throw every thing, checks energy, and creates disgust and despondence.

If from strict and repeated self-examination we can assist in attaining this desirable result, our labour will not be useless. What is ill-

(1) See from *Montaigne* and *Descartes* all the Metaphysical writers down to *Dugald Stewart*.

received or neglected at first, will, if it be true, gradually and imperceptibly work its way, and produce its fruit.

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## CHAPTER XCI.

*Belief in the general selfishness of mankind destroys peace, and brings despondence.*

16 Aug. 1823.

If experience should once force upon us the conviction that every human Being seeks only his own selfish interest, our vigilance and anxiety could never have a moment's rest.

But this is surely not the case. It is only general with certain classes of society, whom their necessities, their want of independence, and their constant and familiar intercourse with the demoralized and fraudulent part of mankind, harden and embrate.

What would become of public virtue, of the spur to undergo bodily labour, and the waste of mental spirits, and perils, and even death,—if it were so? — Where would be the stimulus to fame, or to any unmercenary pursuit? —

There *must be* such an active principle as that of *benevolence* in the world! Men *will* do good for the *sake* of good! for the internal satisfaction, which it gives to the conscience, and the heart!

Is it possible, that all fair words can be intended merely to draw him, to whom they are addressed, into a snare or a pit ?

He, who lives upon the vitals of the necessitous, who « *laps the blood of sorrow* » ; —

« Extortion mounted on the pamper'd steed,  
Which the last tears of starved Misfortune  
feed » (1)

may do so ! — But all the world are not tygers, vultures, hyænas, leopards, or crocodiles, gambling or moaning, that they may dart on their prey unawares !

Yet it is not by public services, and benefit to others, that men become rich, and advance themselves in the world : nor is it generally by genius or talents that they arrive at greatness ! The meanest faculties, always watchful to promote their own individual interests, are much more calculated to effect these ends ; and much more generally succeed. It is strange, but it is true, that Providence permits duplicity and hypocrisy, and false faith and cunning, to carry away the spoils and the laurels in this life !

(1) Fitzalbini.



## CHAPTER XCII.

*Familiarity lessens the ugliness of evil: of which still the traits are certain; and cannot be mistaken.*

21 July 1823.

When we dwell a long while on an evil subject, we lose something of the force of the revolting and glaring impressions, which strike us whenever we return fresh to it. Men may by degrees habituate themselves to hear the most palpable and self-evident truths disputed!

There is a certain point, up to which Candor may be asked and permitted to go, in judging of other men's actions intentions and declarations. But to go *beyond* that point, is to allow the nature of things to be reversed; to admit that there is no real difference between crime and innocence; justice and injustice; right and wrong: that *meum* and *tuum* may be absolutely confounded; and that the boldest and subtlest man may always be made to appear in the right!

We judge of crimes in Courts by rules, which leave no particle of doubt in the mind of an intelligent and wise man. <sup>(1)</sup> No man feels a diffi-

(1) It is not of these strong lines of separation that the *Quarterly Review*, (N.º LVI. vol. XXVIII. 1823, p. 536) speaks, when it says, in reference to the OPPOSITION in Parliament on the Affairs of Spain; «the evidence of what



culty in distinguishing between *murder* and *manslaughter*: — between the premeditated scheme and the accidental ebullition of *momentary* passion: between the *system prepense* of unlawful gain; and the irregularity of means by which the want of fortitude to endure gets out of a dangerous and unforeseen scrape!

I say, that there are *marks of distinction*, which, wherever they occur, can admit of no doubt! and which no man in his senses would allow to be argued away; or would ever hear any argument about!

If there be no distinction between right and wrong; — if a bold man can do what he will with impunity, and without loss of reputation, by

*is right and what is wrong, is not, always striking and conclusive; there is often room for debate; and it is one of the most antient and usual employments of oratory,*

————— to make the worse appear  
The better reason, to perplex and dash  
Maturest counsels.

«The people have in all ages and nations, been suspected of a tendency to take the wrong side of a question; — of being

————— averse  
From all the truth it sees or hears;  
But swallows nonsense and a lie  
With greediness and gluttony.  
And, though it have the pique and long,  
Is still for something in the wrong.»

having the courage and dexterity to support an argument that *black* is *white*; then, in the society where such things prevail, every thing is at the mercy of the most daring and the most unconscientious! — Property, fame, every thing which constitutes the happiness and supplies the wants of Man, — even bread, — is thrown off its base; and tossed into the air, to be scrambled for, and grasped by the strongest and most dextrous hand!

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## CHAPTER XCIII.

*Anxiety for the future.*

18 Aug. 1823.

We have it on holy authority that, *sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*: yet this must not be understood, that a calm foresight and precaution are unnecessary. Even these, however, when only leading to the use of fair and virtuous means, are too commonly inadequate to ward off the misfortunes, — the complicated adversity, — which wicked men have the power to inflict on the sincere, frank, and upright.

*Ah! why then should they know their fate;  
 Since Sorrow never comes too late;  
 And Happiness too swiftly flies?*

*Thought would destroy their Paradise. —  
No more : — where ignorance is bliss,  
Tis folly to be wise! »*

There are, however, some evils which a prospective care may avert; and some, which it may lessen. But the habit of anxiety grows by feeding: and the uncertainty of the future aggravates a disease which lives upon fear.

Nothing then is so desirable, as the *independence*, which can secure us from being exposed to this cancer-worm of the heart. Riches, rank, station, — nay fame, respect, esteem, love, — are all at the mercy of the interests or the caprices of mankind: — without the forethought, management, and solicitude, which outweigh their value, we must not even hope for them! Better to let them come or go, as they will, than thus pay too highly for them! But a competence, a competence not much below those common comforts and conveniencies which early habits have rendered necessities, cannot be dispensed with, unless at the cost of unqualified misery!

So far then foresight, and anxiety for the future, must not be cast aside. Thus it is, to be in a situation in which either alternative is uneasiness, torment, gloom, and despondence!

To brood over our sorrows; to anticipate ill; and to contemplate what is before us till the morbid and terrified fancy sees nothing but

gathering clouds and bursting tempests, can protect us from no affliction which is in store for us; but only weakens the fortitude requisite for endurance; and often adds ideal miseries to the real ones which are already insupportable! —

On the other hand, an hollow safety, a delusive hope, a supine inattention to the Storm,

*« That hush'd in grim repose expects his evening  
prey , »*

increases danger, and multiplies the chances of ruin by giving efficacy to many modes of destruction which might otherwise be escaped.

The future is for the most part hid from us by the wisdom and beneficence of a merciful Providence. If the sufferings which await us were unveiled to our eyes at the commencement of our career, would it be possible for human fortitude to meet and go through its destiny? —

## CHAPTER XCIV.

*Love of Gain breaks all restraints but the iron bonds of  
Power.*

21 July 1823.

He who, being exposed to the temporary evils and injuries of a breach or defiance of law or conscience on the part of others, — has not the

moral courage to endure them in the interval till protection or retribution can come, is at the mercy of whatever the cupidity or malice of scoundrels may choose to inflict !

The alternative may be grievous : but the *lesser* evil **MUST** be boldly incurred !

We may be inclined, *a priori*, to believe that men who have supported a decent character in the world, will, if not from conscience, yet from fear of the world's censure, be under certain restraints as to their actions; and not break those limits, within which the appearance of some degree of coarse and homely honesty is included. — But experience proves that *it is not so!* — There is, among the crowd of men engaged in getting their livelihoods, and making their fortunes, a very large and appalling portion, who have no restraint whatever but what they deem, upon a calculation of all their means, a preponderating chance of exposure and punishment. They are utterly insensible to any emotion of generosity, or sting of regret, or reluctance: they do not feel a moment's hesitation to take advantage of kind confidence; or to deceive by the most shameless pretensions of hypocrisy: at the instant they deal the blow of ruin, or administer the poison of death, they shed crocodilian tears; they talk of the vanities of this world; of the worthlessness of pelf; of the emptiness of



earthly advantages ; and the only comfort to be had in purity of conscience ! If at last you detect them in ROBBERY ; they cry , like Robin Hood , that « *they only rob the rich , to give to the poor !* »

Nothing will keep them in the right path but the iron rod of force and power. They will plunder even under the gallows ! They laugh at reproaches : words are wind to them ; — and they regard nothing but blows !

Yet with all their cunning and dissimulation , they expose the cloven foot to a shrewd eye at every turn ! — Men sometimes become so habituated to evil , that they at last lose the perception of the lines between right and wrong. — They then betray themselves , when they are not aware of the discovery they are making.

## CHAPTER CXV.

### *The Neglected Poet.*

( *A Fragment.* )

29 May 1823.

Why mourning still ? Why does thy Sun depart  
 With thine hopes buried in thy gloomy heart ?  
 Thine earthly hopes ! for hope of pleasure here  
 Ought still to travel onward to the bier !  
 If man is born to trouble , thou thy share,  
 Not discontent , art also born to bear !

Why shouldst thou free from envy seek to find  
The paths, where half that tread them, wander  
blind ?

Tis fear and want of confidence, that pour  
The poisonous bitter on the bosom's store !  
If light before thee shines ; if backward shines  
Light of the past ; ungrateful then repines  
Thy spirit, that, as beams of morning, gay,  
Should still unclouded throw its setting ray !  
If not to thee belongs the noisy fame,  
That echoing clamours round another's name ;  
Wrapt in thyself, if thou art left alone  
To sigh thy fancies to the breeze's moan,  
Thou hast a world around thee, which thy wand  
Can marshal, call, dismiss at its command !  
Lord of thyself, thou holdest from thy throne  
An empire, despot monarchs cannot own !  
The hate of Man ; the coward, chilling blast,  
That upstart half-taught Ignorance would cast  
Upon thine artless strains, if but the spell,  
Firm to its purpose, should th' assault repell,  
Sun-pierced, like vapours foul that blot the sky,  
Back to its den of deadly fumes would fly !  
Sin, Error, Falsehood, restless Plot, Deceit,  
Corruption, daring Violence, repeat  
From day to day upon this warring globe,  
( Where Man puts on for woe his mortal robe, )  
Their ever-working tasks. — It is the lot,  
Which from the *Book of Life* Man cannot blot.

Folly and Wickedness, by Heaven's decrees,  
 Honour and profit here triumphant sieze;  
 While Virtue mourns; and Wisdom silent sits;  
 And Genius heard, (if heard at all,) by fits,  
 Praised with an idiot shout, is left in tears  
 Lonely to waste the winter of his years:  
 Hiss'd if he touch the heavenly chord; and told,  
 The glass to Earth's impurities to hold!

*etc. etc. etc.*

O thou immortal, and ethereal Queen,  
 Who never by unholy eye art seen;  
 Thou, who in secret hold'st th' inspiring reign  
 O'er all that ever breathed the genuine strain;  
 Where dost thou dwell? Where Earth her glories  
 spreads

In mountains, vales, seas, lakes, and woods,  
 and meads?

Or rather thro' th' empyreal air dost fly,  
 Filling all space by thy ubiquity?  
 Thence passing thro' the heart of Man, thy wing  
 Touches the mountains whence the waters spring  
 Of Castaly; — when out the torrent flows;  
 And bears th' entrancing strain of joys or woes!  
 Unlock'd by thee, *there*, mystic Goddess, lies  
 The source, whence Bards to power resistless rise!  
 It is not thine, to bid the human brain  
 Plot its fantastic forms with whim insane;  
 Force to distorted shapes the simple store,  
 That Memory treasures of external lore;

Then bid the voluntary maniac tell,  
That in his busy mind *creations* dwell!  
Not to thine ear may such blaspheming tongue  
Outrage by childish boast the sons of song!

O Thou, of mien severe, to Truth allied,  
And solemn Wisdom ever by thy side;  
How dost thou scorn the piles of glittering ore  
Raised by the false Enchanter's gaudy lore!  
Thou who, companion fit, as Bards <sup>(1)</sup> have said,  
Sat'st by, with wonder mute, when worlds were  
made,

Tis thine to picture with thy pencil warm  
The shadowy shapes then moulded into form:  
But most of Man; and in his heart to trace  
That sympathy with every outward grace,  
Which trembles with mysterious joy or pain;  
Then bursts unbidden to the vocal strain!  
Glowing beneath thy smiles, the melting chords  
Catch from thy breathing lips the magic words;  
Then out the swelling notes of music ring;  
And with wild rapture quivers every string!

But mimic Art, that mocking Power divine,  
The great Creator's wonders would outshine;—  
Poor driveling Art, that with a puny hand  
Bids toys and monsters rise at his command  
Then with an idiot smile of self-applause,  
New forms the soul, and gives to nature laws;

(1) Collins. *Ode on the Poetical Character.*

Sports with its work, by blind conceit betray'd;  
Then worships the vain idol it has made!

Art! pitiless, unpitiable Art! —

Rise, thou true Goddess; and the lightnings dart,  
Which from thy forehead blaze; — then down  
shall fall

Her fanes of false religion; — shrines and all!

But thou, immortal Power, art merciful;  
And wilt not over human bosoms rule  
With rod unsparing: thy all-bounteous eye  
Will view man's vain endeavours with a sigh;  
Forgive his boasting follies; and will still  
To higher aims direct his froward will:  
Upon his labouring fancy, dark with toil,  
Perplexing and perplex'd, sometimes thy smile  
Will beam a casual light, and genial glow,  
That bids the purple tide in freedom flow  
Thro' the reviving heart, dispersing clouds  
Whose vapour every generous bosom shrouds!  
Then the false Seer, arising from the cell,  
Where with his demons he was wont to dwell,  
Comes forth to incense-breathing day, and views  
The golden Sun; and feels his heart diffuse  
A joy unknown before; and sees around  
All nature spread before him; every sound  
Breathes music to his ear; and every sight  
Strikes to his soul ineffable delight.

« Give me thy lyre, thou only Queen of Song!

» Only to thee», he cries, « to thee belong



- » The' harmonious strings of Truth! Upon those  
strings
- » Great Nature her enraptured fingers flings;  
» And draws out notes, which Heaven ordains  
should fire
- » With rapture due immortal man's desire!  
» Within my cave full many a weary year  
» My tortured chords have striven to wake the  
tear
- » Deep-buried in the human breast : — in vain  
» I urged the twisted wires ; my noisy strain  
» Fell dull and lifeless on th' insensate ear ;  
» Or roar'd with senseless joy ; or writhed with  
maniac fear !
- » I hail'd strange Imps from the delirious Hall,  
» Where Spirits, as I deem'd , were at my call !  
» They were the fictions of a frantic mind ,  
» Forced into wildering shapes, with fury blind ,  
» By pride audacious, and an heart of stone  
» Impiercible by movements not its own !  
» But thou , celestial Emanation , sprung  
» Coæval with that primal Day , which hung  
» This pensile Orb within its azure space ,  
» Who saw'st the' Omnipotent his fabric trace,  
» Beheld'st with eye congenial Chaos yield ,  
» And every form of Earth to life reveal'd ;  
» Nor saw'st th' external shape alone design'd ;  
» But saw'st infused in Man th' immortal Mind !  
» Not thine the toil , to strive with fruitless art

- » The mirror of Creation to impart!  
 » Still at thy touch or call each form awakes;  
 » And every shape its breathing likeness takes;  
 » Each movement of the soul; each inward  
     thought;  
 » Embodied to material view is brought;  
 » Each dim-discover'd tract, which human sight,  
 » Unaided, faintly sees, is raised to light.»

Thus falls the film from the false Mage's  
     eyes;

And thus th' harmonious Harp of Truth he tries:  
 With force he throws his hand across the  
     wire;

But at his touch no music will respire:  
 The power that rules it, sits the soul within;  
 No outward hand the due response can win.  
 With rage the lyre he dashes to the ground;  
 With dying shrieks its thousand fragments sound;  
 And in dispersion sad lie broken round.

Then thro' the air shoots forth a glittering ray;  
 And a light mocking Laughter seems to say,  
 « Look up! behold the glories of your feat!

» A thousand other lyres are prompt to greet  
 » The gifted hand! » — and sitting on a cloud

A Quire of Angels strike their harps aloud:  
 And harps above his head descending play;  
 Just mock his grasp; then sail on winds away.

Meantime in swelling stream th' eternal lay  
 Sounds thro' heaven's concave, by the gifted ear

Heard plain on earth, while with mysterious fear  
 It listens to th' unwonted din of Song,  
 Mazed at the strife celestial choirs among!

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## CHAPTER XCVI.

*A poet must be exalted in his own private feelings and habits.*

21 April 1823.

IF a Poet, or a pretender to Poetry, should prove to be, in his private character and habits, of ordinary modes of thinking; of ordinary feelings, desires, passions, and ambitions, these facts alone would render the genuineness of his poetry suspicious.

A real poet must delight in visionary pleasures: his enthusiasm must be ardent: he must be enraptured with grandeur, and enraptured with beauty: he must place his hope upon foundations, where dull minds would despair. He must not vie with petty rivals in vulgar pursuits: he must not see things merely in their hard material form, unsurrounded by the rays supplied by imagination. He must live, not in the world as it is; — but in a world of his own, such as his imagination dreams that it ought to be!

GRAY, in the view of the world, was cold and fastidious: but when his enthusiasm could indulge itself with confidence, he delighted to nurse these visionary propensities: witness, the ardour with which he encouraged himself in the belief of *Ossian*: and the accidental hearing of the Welsh Harper, which prompted him to finish his BARD!

He who examines, dissects, and calculates, before he admires, can never admire with warmth.

Vivid fancy, active and powerful imagination, and strong feelings, united with forcible intellect, and a successful cultivation of language, are necessary to make a poet.

Glow of colouring is one of the characteristics of Genius: but excellence and novelty of form are also requisite.

Glow of colouring was never yet attained by labour and artifice.

## CHAPTER XCVII.

*The aggravated evils of that adversity, which is driven to seek comfort in delusions.*

29 July 1823.

HE, who places himself, or is placed by Misfortune, in a situation, to which the application of the light of Truth gives an exposure painful

and difficult to be endured, is often driven to seek the delusions of Imagination, and to encourage erroneous colours and false views of things, rather than to seek to dispel them.

Thus it is that both misconduct and adversity often tend to mislead and blind the understanding, as well as to afflict and consume the heart.

It is true that very wicked men are often very strong-headed; — accurate observers; and acute-reasoners: but then they are men, who see things *exactly as they are*; at least in a narrow and worldly point of view. The consequences they predict, are precisely those which are likely to ensue: and though they ought not to ensue, if this life were a life in which Virtue were destined to be rewarded, and wickedness to be punished, the understanding of such men becomes more shrewd, and skilful; and their hopes are kept alive, in proportion as their observation continues close to experience, and allies itself to reality.

He, who joins folly to wickedness; who is wicked and yet unsuccessful; he who proposes wrong ends by inadequate and mistaken means; has no consolation for the ill he commits.

There are, however, evils in the world, which are not the result of bad intentions; but of mistaken judgment, and ill-founded wishes: — of expectations, perhaps, built on a supposed conduct of mankind different from that which a



nice and sober attention to actual life would justify. There is no guilt in this: it may often arise from a charitable and generous habit of imputing to others stricter principles and more honourable motives than belong to them. But it often leads into snares, which human fortitude is not strong enough to contemplate in their native frightfulness. Then error begets error: one delusion propagates another: and though the imagination may flourish and even augment, the understanding weakens and decays.

Sometimes indeed, this is only confined to a particular topic; while on all others the mind continues sound: — but it is, in general, more or less contagious. —

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## CHAPTER XCVIII.

*Repetitions of opinions not always tautologies.*

23 May 1823.

THESE Papers contain opinions principally on *Poetry*, and more particularly *English* poetry, in which perhaps there may be a good deal of tautology: but in the endeavour to impress some great principle, it is probable that the occasional variety of the language which may have suggested itself at the moment, will have contributed to

enforce the development of the idea. — It is only by repeated renewals of our labour that we arrive at the mastery over some of the difficult and evanescent distinctions of the mind: What is borrowed and ready-made for us, seems quite easy in the adoption: it is not, however, so easy to create.

There are minds, which will take nothing without examination; without going through the process of thought themselves.

But if they do by any chance, either to fulfill an imposed task, or in hurry or weariness, write from memory, and not from conviction, they lose whatever charm, or force, they had before; and become *inferiors* even in a very minor class.

I am quite convinced that SINCERITY is one of the primary charms in the poetry of Burns: and that if he ever used memory, it was only to aid him in expressing his own images and feelings.

1.<sup>st</sup> We cannot surrender up our minds to any one, whom we do not think in earnest.

2.<sup>d</sup> No affecter of feelings ever really hits the true chords.



## CHAPTER XCIX.

*Gray's Travels.*

27 Jan. 1823.

GRAY in his Travels with Walpole, 1739-1741, followed the usual routes through France and Italy.

The first object of magnificence in scenery which seems to have struck him was the position of the *Grande Chartreuse*, which he visited in an excursion from Lyons to Geneva, by the line of Savoy, in the direction of Chambery.

He afterwards crossed the Alps by Mont Cenis to Turin, and Genoa: and thence back to Placenza, Parma, Reggio, Modena, and Bologna. — Whence he crossed the Apennines to Florence and passed over these Mountains again, at another point, to Rome: and terminated his travels south at Naples. — On his return, he passed northward thro' Lombardy to Venice; and thence back through Milan to Turin: and homeward by the same route as he came.

The qualities which fit a man to travel to advantage, and to relate his travels to advantage, are not common. Correct and profound observations upon life, manners, and politics, are not very easily made: a fine and accurate taste for the Arts, though pretensions are often made to

it, is very rare: — and a description of the scenery of nature, clear, yet not feeble; — forcible, yet not ostentatious and overwrought; enthusiastic yet simple and unaffected; — with « *words* » not glaring and pompous, but such as « *burn* » with genuine fire; — is not to be effected by any but by a mind of the most rich poetical power.

Gray possessed this high and enviable endowment. It requires a brilliant perception: but this is not all: it demands something far beyond a mere brilliant perception. The choice of features and circumstances is partly formed by an exquisite intellectual sensibility and judgment: the exact line between that which is too general, and that which perplexes by minuteness, is seldom duly seen or duly adhered to.

Gray's pictures, though rich, are never strained. He still uses an economy of phrase: he leaves an impression, that his ideas are still richer, than his words; that « more is meant than meets the ear »; and that his raptures are so unsought, that they break out in spite of him.

It does not require much ingenuity to be florid; to round sentences; and to embroider with clusters of images and metaphors. But there is « *a sober certainty of delight* » in what Gray undertakes to register, that carries with it an authority and faith not to be resisted.

## CHAPTER C.

*Pictures of the penetralia of poetical minds, curious and instructive.*

12 July 1823.

The impression on the mind, which is violent, is not always clear; because its violence may make its effect tumultuous.

It is long before the tumults caused by the vivacity of the Senses of Genius subside. When therefore the man of Genius enters life, he sees every thing through a mist.

To be successful in the world, it is necessary to see things exactly as they are. But there is an additional cause why men of Genius do not do so. They see things as they wish them to be: or as their imaginations represent them.

The belief that mankind are more virtuous or more benevolent than they really are, leads the believer into perpetual snares. The seeing things in their precise and exact colours, is that useful faculty which is called shrewdness or sagacity. But he may be shrewd in the closet, who is confused and deranged in the conflict of action.

It is the perpetual contest between imagination and judgment, which is among the evils that torment Genius. — A consciousness of this inconsi-



stency haunts it: and always occupies it in struggling to develop and reconcile it.

All the mysteries of our strangely-united intellectual and material nature exhibit themselves in full operation in persons of Genius: and thus court its observation, and harass its curiosity.

Pride, hope, sorrow, temptation, submission and repentance, impel, delude, and afflict the kindling fancy and susceptible heart of persons highly endowed. When they are tempted to lay the pictures of these curious emotions before the world, they perform a most difficult and important service in opening the penetralia of intellect.

Thus when Rousseau and Lord Byron paint their strange perturbations and wild passions, they awaken all the secret springs of the human mind and human heart from their cells.

When a Poet has long dealt with these visionary subjects, he courts rather than strives to appease this agitated temperament of intellect. It is the source of his occupations, and the instrument of his fame. He does not encourage that cold philosophy, which by destroying his wonders, and rendering him calm and easy, would at the same time extinguish his enthusiasm.

In some Beings Nature seems to have implanted a Satanic love of wickedness; a revengeful joy at the sorrows and misfortunes of Mankind; as if in retaliation for success ill-deserved; or unme-

rited distinction bestowed on meanness and folly: — or as if in anger to the Creator for not having bestowed enjoyments more congenial to the hopes, desires, and imaginations of an aspiring Soul!

Grand thoughts, and eloquent and magnificent language often arise from a mind thus constructed and disciplined.

The contrasts between the most sublime or exquisite forms of ideal beauty, and the hatefulness of vulgar and loathsome reality related with bitter force, become doubly striking in the productions of Genius so constituted! The very freedom from restraint and boldness which it gives, is a great assistant to success.

We love the representation of violent passions; and feel a sympathy with them, even when we do not experience them originally in ourselves.

Those gentle spirits, which see every thing correctly and amiably, but feebly and faintly, have none of the attributes of Genius. Labour and polish will do but little. We want energy and strong impulse. What authors cannot feel, they cannot imagine! —

The taste in England, as well as in Germany, is a taste for what is striking and powerful. The French have always liked better the poetry of reason and good sense. And the Court of Ch. II. introduced this taste into England; — and it

continued to prevail till the death of Pope: viz. nearly ninety years. That which followed, tho' it took a little more boldness and energy of language and dress, yet continued for the most part tame in thought and sentiment. Art, and technicalities, predominated. The wild flights of real passion; the perturbations of a strong mind disappointed, indignant, and daring; had not ventured to clothe themselves in unpremeditated and unforced poetry.

There may be a clear fancy, and an active imagination, without much passion: — but this defect must always retain a poet below the highest class. What is merely material can never impress and affect, like that which is combined with intellectual emotion, when that intellectual emotion is calculated to agitate the heart.

All those associations, sentiments, and reflections, which are generated by an intense and long-continued reflection upon a subject, have for the most part a peculiar and constrained connection with it, which raises no instantaneous and unprompted sympathy in the reader's mind: and which therefore seldom, if ever, touches his heart; — because the heart must be touched instantly, if at all. There is a natural sympathy of the heart with certain images, which is not the result of reasoning or meditation; but the immediate result of intrinsic impulse. — To feel

this; and to have the clearness of perception, and command of language, by which he who feels can communicate his feeling to others; are far from being the same thing! —

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## CHAPTER CI.

### *Just Invention.*

15 June 1823.

The word-dealers in poetry are men of ready memory, and a certain degree of technical skill. — They have a feeble fancy, no imagination, and little feeling.

It is not necessary that a Tale of Invention should adhere to the daily minutiae of actual life. These minutiae continually change with the fashion of the day; and what is interesting while that prevails, becomes absurd, after its usage has passed.

Coarse minds can only be operated upon by the associations of the actual events with which they are conversant. What is abstract, or general, or visionary, does not touch them. But great intellects delight in the sublime and indefinite outlines of what is general: — with them the very particularity, which rouses dull faculties, destroys the charm.

Invention duly exercised, is the noblest of all our mental faculties. — But it must have its

sources in the strong, native, and virtuous emotions of the heart: it must be supplied by moral knowledge, and directed by moral wisdom: its materials must be enriched by sagacious enquiry, and profound thought. It must be impelled by energy, enthusiasm, and love of glorious fame.

It must deal in what is grand or beautiful in sentiment, imagery, and thought, and what is eloquent, and noble, or elegant, in expression.

At a crisis when the Public, — that is the Multitude, — are accustomed to be indulged with something more piquant, more full of incitement, than what a sound intellect can supply, or approve, these things indeed may seem flat and dull to the generality of readers. Glaring colours, monstrous combinations, have unfitted the eye for what is chaste and genuine. As he, who has long lived in the delirium of wine, festive company, throngs of people, and pompous shews, would sink into apathy or despondence amid the quiet grandeur of solitary Nature: or would pine for want of refreshment beside fountains of the purest water!

To invent an human character, at once probable, interesting, elevated, and virtuous, is no light achievement of the mind. — To put it in motion; to create incidents in which it may display itself, augments the merit. — Copies of reality would probably be coarse and dull. — Reality



is always in the way of our most dignified and most refined feelings : it crosses them ; and infuses something bitter , or something ordinary and degrading. It is only therefore in characters of Invention that we can keep the stream exalted. — It must not be such as moments of passion alone delight to represent , and which moments of reason condemn. It must be passion sanctioned by reason.

It is of the essence of the fancy and imagination of Genius, to colour deeply ; to exalt and improve : to give the likeness ; but to give it heightened. — It is therefore incompatible with the essence of Poetry to choose ugliness , deformity , and squalid misery for its theme. If it were otherwise , it would be its business to render what revolts , more revolting.

## C H A P T E R C I I .

### *Tests of Originality.*

4 June 1823.

The test of Poetry is , whether the author shews the marks of *inspiration* : whether he seems under the unsought dominion of the Muse ! whether he is under the force of a fulness , which struggles at language no further , than as it is the vehicle of thought !

They who labour much at the workmanship, cannot be under the influence of much enthusiasm.

Whatever image is taken thro' the medium of the types of language is necessarily *unoriginal*. Language should follow, not precede, the origin of an image. It may be doubted, if they who derive the image from the language, have any thing more than a technical perception of the image: with them the language is the substance; not the vehicle.

And this distinction seems to me to pervade the compositions of all secondary poets. The image itself is not present to them; but the words of some predecessor. *Dugald Stewart* speaks of a memory of *words*; and not of *things*.

The dealer in words is a workman of technical compositions. Such compositions may dazzle; but they never cause simple and profound impressions.

Men of memory are ductile and ready: they catch all characters, but are possessed by none. They never draw from nature: they have no self-motion; but always derive their impulse from others.

What comes to us thro' the medium of language, we may reject, when we will: — but what comes direct upon the mind, it is not in our power to set aside. A Genius therefore is never a

master of his feelings or his thoughts. His energies, his enthusiasms, the «possession of the spirit», shew themselves in defiance of his attempt at controul: and he becomes a character marked by peculiarities; eccentricities; and perhaps, imprudences.

Every thing of personal history in the biography of poets is confirmatory of this position. Of all, whose productions are admitted by the test of time to be of the genuine ore, the personal characteristics are energy, deep or quick sensibility, fixed opinions, unaffected love of the vast or the beautiful; and a contemplative, visionary, unworldly turn of mind.

Images are always present to them; — images of the mind, not of external objects. If they were dependent on the presence of external objects, they would be at the mercy of place, time, and accident.

The great distinction of a poet is to be visionary: to live in an ideal world.

I do not believe the representation of external objects to be the purpose of poetry: but the representation of mental images, in association with feelings and reflections.

I do not believe the explanations, which metaphysical philosophy furnishes, proper to form the spring of poetical pleasure. Therefore a *didactic* poem, explaining metaphysically the *plea-*

*sures of Memory* or *pleasures of Hope*, is fundamentally erroneous. Poetry looks to instantaneous effects; not to those which are produced by the gradations of a chain of reasoning. This analysis, this dissection, is the very thing that destroys the charm.

In Invention, there must be a grandeur and softness of soul; an energy and tenderness of affection; a brilliance and majesty of fancy; a penetration and sagacity of judgment; an insight into that course, which, by the decrees of Providence, the passions of Man almost universally follow.

When, about twenty-eight years ago, the system of English poetry, satiated with words instead of images, underwent a violent revolution, it seems to have passed, not from words to thoughts or visions, but from words to realities; or what were deemed realities. — Hence it fell into alternations of coarseness and extravagance.

### CHAPTER CIII.

*Nobility may be made too numerous and common,*

30 May 1823.

Nothing is more idle and nonsensical than the talk of unthinking, mean-passioned, people on the subject of the PEERAGE.

When it is contended, that it ought not to be indiscriminately and profusely conferred, these people are up in arms, as if there were a wish to confine it to a *privileged Few*; and to refuse it to Merit, and to Riches, which they often argue as being in some degree tantamount to merit.

When I contend that it ought not to be too numerous, they confound the number with the quality of the persons created.

I argue, that men not particularly distinguished in any way, either for birth, wealth, or personal merit, afford no colour of apology for the augmentation of numbers; and can only be created from corrupt motives.

Personal merit, of a very high class, such as brilliant success as chiefs in war, may justify the creation, — even tho' the Individual be without birth or riches.

My opponents then turn round upon me, and say that Nobility without riches is dangerous: and therefore that it is necessary to introduce the creation of the Rich at the same time, to counterpoise this weakness.

But why mere riches? If this absurd pretence for a counterpoise be admitted, cannot riches be found united with birth and merit?

The meaning of these puzzle-headed arguers is merely to find a colour for making wealth.



the ground of Nobility! — They even assert that, as to confer benefits on one's country is the most just ground of reward and distinction, so commerce is the greatest benefit to a country; and therefore ought to be so rewarded and distinguished.

But how are the greatest commercial Riches made? — By dealings on the stock-exchange; which they consider not only commerce; but the most honourable sort of commerce! — Did the nation ever receive benefit from such dealings?

## CHAPTER CIV.

*A day without a line.*

SONNET.

26 May 1823.

A day without a line! — It is not so,  
 That I would waste this transient feverish life,  
 That in its heat consumes the short-breathed  
 trace

Of its own passage! I would still record  
 Each momentary pang, born in the strife  
 Of daily turmoil with a world, where grace  
 Falls on the worthless only; where, abhorr'd  
 By base Corruption, Virtue walks in woe! —



nation. The soundness of a doctrine ought not to be impeached, because he who teaches it is not always skilful in putting it into action.

All discoveries, all that is original in the propagation of Truth, are effected by the light of Imagination. The man of Imagination is entitled to assume his premises: but practical skill and wisdom depend upon an accurate observation of premises, over which the practitioner has no command.

The faculties exercised therefore in speculation and in action are quite distinct, and almost opposite.

But what is true in theory, must be true in practice: when it seems to be otherwise, the cause must be, that the principle is not really and strictly applicable to the case. When the facts come accurately within the limits of a principle, it is dangerous and inadmissible to endeavour to evade the obligation by any excuse founded on the supposition of a contrariety between truth in speculation and truth in action.

The unconscientious, corrupt, and insensible wretches, who for the most part carry on the affairs of the world, always deal in this profligate excuse. The lessons of theory are with them no longer operative, than while they make for their purpose. The instant that they come

in their way, they get rid of them by the opprobrious epithet of *speculative* dogmas! When they desire to refuse such authorities, they ought to endeavour to rid themselves of the *applicability* of the *facts*: if they cannot do this, the charge that the rule from which they would be dispensed is *speculative*, can never justly avail them.

It is not meant to decry the value of practical wisdom in its proper sense: but when it puts itself in opposition to theory, and claims a superiority over it, then its pretensions are at once false and ridiculous. It can advance but a few steps without theory; and when it goes in opposition to it, it is sure to be wrong: *that is*, it proves itself to be a pretender, and forfeits the right to the name which it assumes.

The use of speculative intelligence, which is often remote, circuitous, hidden, and contingent, can never be appreciated by men of dull faculties, hard hearts, and low and selfish pursuits. That which is not direct in its consequences, and which does not tend strait to the individual's private interest, is deemed idle, fanciful, and empty. They do not think it possible that any one can sincerely waste his labours and energies for any benefit except his own.

In Beings of mean qualities and mean ambitions, the world is content to find any thing

of good : but from the highly - endowed and the highly-cultivated it exacts incompatibilities and impossibilities. It calls on them to be as skilful in little things , as wise in great : — with glances accustomed to range through the Universe , it calls upon them for microscopic attention; and invariable accuracy in trifles. When their imaginations are creating ideal existences, it charges them with crime , because they wander away from hard realities! —

## CHAPTER CVI.

T E B A L D O.

( *A Fragment.* )

18 June 1823.

PENT in this mortal clay , the Spirit lives  
 And burns sometimes, till its pervading fire  
 Changes the earthly substance to a veil  
 Transparent , and to golden atoms turns  
 The film of massy darkness. In the mind  
 Then lies all happiness. Those elements  
 Of matter , which this human frame compose,  
 Then yield dominion to the soul that rules  
 O'er all emotion , will , hope , fear , and end.  
 Sensation then expires not with itself:                    10  
 But onward to the heart its rays are borne ;



And there into its inmost shrines received,  
 Rich with the streams where they have laved,  
 return,

And colour every thought, and give a glow  
 To new Imagination's varying lights.

In a lone Tower, that frown'd upon a glen  
 Of beechen forest, sunk within the heights  
 Of the gigantic Appenines, was born

TEBALDO : he was sprung of generous blood  
 In fortune's evil hour : a Troubadour 20

His father long had wandered, from his realms  
 Exiled by tyrant usurpation : Love  
 Had led a damsel of his Court to join  
 His flying steps; in all his dangers share;  
 And vow eternal faith to him alone.

Such was *Tebaldo's* mother : ere he knew  
 To prize a mother's care, the cruel stroke  
 Of Death removed the blessing from his reach;  
 And then his childhood pass'd in solitude :  
 For oft his father roved abroad; and long 30

Long months was absent; — a devoted nurse  
 His sole companion left. The wintry night  
 Heard the loud winds crossing from sea to sea  
 With mighty roar; and Adriatic waves  
 Mingling their spray upon the winged blast  
 With that Mid Ocean whose broad waters part  
 Iberian shores from Afric's barbarous land.

And when the year's departing glories threw  
 Light golden tints upon the sloping groves

Of beechen foliage, the lone pensive child      40  
 Would sit enraptured, half as if in dreams,  
 And half with eye and ear drinking delight  
 At every image, ray, tint, cloud, or sound:  
 Or when his hands and dancing limbs would call  
 For active exercise, in fragrant heaps  
 He cull'd the falling leaves, and with the store  
 Built fairy castles, and fantastic bowers.

Within the massy walls of that grim Tower,  
 The only dwelling-place he yet had known,  
 When rain in mountain torrents fell, or snow      50  
 In gathering whirlwinds whelm'd the face of  
 Heaven,

He still had occupations not unfit  
 For his excursive spirit: much of lore,  
 Historic, Legendary, Fabulous,  
 His Sire, in characters he knew to read,  
 Had left: and much he read each wondrous tale;  
 And much his fancy added; much his heart  
 Swell'd with new glory, and ambition's fire.

His aged fond companion still could give  
 Store of adventures strange, which never pen      60  
 Had yet recorded, gather'd from the lips  
 Of her still absent Lord: and still the bud  
 Of his fed mind expanded with the showers  
 Of fertilising manna, which each day  
 Fell on its growing strength. A mouldering spire  
 High-lifted on the battlemented square,  
 That roof'd his ruin'd dwelling, sometimes drew

His truant feet to climb its tapering rise,  
 And sit upon its giddy top; and thence  
 Catch the dim glimpse of waters, which the  
 chain 70

Of earthly ridge gigantic as a bar  
 Cut into two vast Oceans: « Does that world  
 »Of restless rolling element divide  
 »My Sire and me? O how I wish that I  
 »Could pass its awful limits, and behold  
 »Scenes more congenial to my wild desires?»

And now the purple bloom of youth began  
 To mantle on his cheek; and feats of arms,  
 And tales of battle, on his wondering mind  
 Held not exclusive sway: the strain, that told  
 A lady's beauty, or a lover's woes,  
 Began to rival, and then supersede  
 His earlier sympathies: he dream'd of love;  
 And beauty in celestial charms array'd  
 He saw in all his visions. Wide he roam'd  
 O'er neighbouring heights and dells and slopes;  
 but saw

No creature such as his rapt fancy drew.  
 Sometimes amid the shades, on violet banks  
 Just opening to the Sun, his eye entranced  
 At distance drew the forms of sleeping nymphs 90  
 Scarce shadow'd by transparent veils, in glow  
 Of heavenly charms: but ere he nearer drew,  
 The vision was dissolved in air: sometimes  
 A peasant girl in nature's simple glow,

Caught the rich tint from his imagination ;  
 And seem'd an angel , till the approach betray'd  
 The wild delusion. But he fed his hopes  
 Still with the waking dreams , which thro' the  
 day

His mind's creations foster'd. The high notes  
 Of many a bard inspired, from hour to hour, 100  
 And week to week he con'd , till equal strains  
 He struggled to indite ; and as the web  
 Of his bright textures stronger grew , he seiz'd  
 The lyre, and struck the chords symphoniously  
 To his young fablings. In the yellow groves  
 Nymphs seem'd to people the dim shadowy  
 haunts ,

And gleamy openings: cross the concave dells  
 To the opposing slopes the harp's vibrations  
 Flung the rebounding tones: the beechen glens  
 Of Appenine became a fairy haunt ; 110  
 And Heaven's now irreversible decree  
 Destin'd *Tebaldo* to the calling high ,  
 And only fate , to which a Bard is doom'd.

The youthful Bard had thro' a toilsome  
 day 114  
 Roved till his limbs were weary ; stretch'd at  
 night

On the hard pallet of his native home ,  
 He slumber'd deep, till a strange vision came ;  
 It had an angel's shape and wings : the blaze  
 Of an angelic beauty ; and a voice

Melodious, as if of celestial birth.

120

It stood below his feet ; and gazing long  
 With smiles of good ineffable, it spake  
 Thus to his ravish'd ears, «O come with me ;  
 »Rise from this dreary solitude : the world ,  
 »And all its joys await thee!» At the sound,  
 Or seeming sound, he woke : but all was dark,  
 And silent : then a chill came over him ;  
 And in the hope the vision might again  
 Visit his longing senses, he composed  
 Himself again to slumber: but the Form 130  
 Return'd not : and he rose with feverish pain  
 To soothe his restless spirits with the balm  
 Of morning air fresh blowing o'er those heights  
 Aerial : the faint murmur of the wave  
 That, leagues away, foam'd on the shelving shore,  
 He deem'd his ear could catch : he climb'd the  
 spire  
 And thought he saw the white sails, ( which in  
 song  
 Of bold Crusader were so oft rehearsed , )  
 Borne on the wave quick-glancing in the Sun ;  
 Then down with trembling hands and beating  
 heart 140  
 Fast from that giddy seat he came : a scrip,  
 Companion of his childish walks, he seized,  
 And rush'd to take a slight farewell of her,  
 Who nursed his infancy, and to that hour  
 Was almost all that he of social knew.



«Beloved, revered! a spirit calls! I go  
 »Beyond my wonted rambles! if my feet  
 »At night-fall do not reach their usual home,  
 »Alarm not thy fond heart! I go to seek  
 »My father:— and the call of Heaven impels, 150  
 »Where Hope resistless points to Glory's paths!»

There was no pause for a reply: as if  
 With winged swiftness his light form withdrew;  
 And mid the foliage of the beechen glen  
 Eluded sight. The Dame astounded sat  
 Mute, trembling, tearless: her amazed thought,  
 Rest of conjecture, sunk to vacancy:  
 And when the night return'd, the same dull state  
 Render'd her senseless of the void: the morn  
 Broke on her stupor; and another day 160  
 Was still without account: another night;  
 And yet no footsteps: a low murmur rose  
 Up from the grove that at the rocky base  
 Of the lone Turret sloped t' th' dingle: blasts  
 Then shriek'd to th' Adriatic: by th' alarm  
 The sad deserted Dame aroused, exclaim'd,  
 «O my Tebaldo! thy defenceless head,  
 »Where rests it now?» And then she wept; and  
 tears  
 Relieved her sorrow: and from day to day  
 Still she wept on, till a calm melancholy 170  
 Subdued her mind to patience; and the time  
 Roll'd smooth, tho' tedious; and by fits sweet  
 Hope

Would break the clouds by transient rays of  
light.

Tebaldo rambled far ; and rested nought ,  
Till Night's dark mantle overspread his path.  
Then in an humble cot he entrance found ;  
And hospitable cheer , though homely : much  
His host he question'd ; and his host as much  
Of him demanded : long his road had been ;  
Descending still ; yet never at the base. 180  
But he at length was near the plain : he learn'd  
Many a strange tale of weary travellers  
Passing the same worn path : for oft the cot  
Tempted the wanderer when the shades of night  
Surprised him at the mountain's foot : a book  
Lay on the shelf where pilgrims went to sign  
Some brief memorial of their resting place.  
Here many a name , and many a mystic note ,  
And many a wish , and many a sentiment ,  
Tebaldo read with curious eye , while thoughts 190  
Busy , confused , and multitudinous ,  
Loaded his aching mind ; and to his heart  
Sunk with oppressive weight ; for much of grief ,  
Of danger , disappointment , wrong , and pain ,  
And want , they spoke ; and benefits forgot ;  
And ill return'd for good ; and faithless love ;  
And Beauty's treacherous charms ; and emptiness  
Of station , honours , riches ; and the prayer  
For still retreats , where from a stormy world  
Virtue and Innocence alone are safe. 200





## CHAPTER CVII.

*Extract of a Letter.**The line of worldly success.**Use of Books.*

12 Sept. 1823.

All the good and complacence of life depends on *opinion* and *sentiment*: and all one has to do, or wishes to have to do, with FACTS, is to keep them down, and manage them; so as not to disturb or overturn these more essential sources of our proper Being. —

There is no knowlege which the vulgar think of any value except that which conduces to what they CALL *practical* wisdom. — By *practical* wisdom they mean a skill in the artifices and tricks, by which worldly-minded men succeed in life over the ill-placed faith of simple rectitude.

It is now become clear to my conviction that no one can advance himself in life by honest means. — Providence permits this: and we are not bound to account for it, to justify our belief in it. —

The great weapon of success is hypocrisy and dissimulation. And if it be so, and we cannot help it, nothing is more desirable than to *know that it is so* —

All other knowlege is nothing compared with an insight into the human character, — with an acquaintance with the movements of the heart; and the springs of action. — No valuable intelligence is drawn from dry facts: we want principles and axioms.

It must not be supposed, that because there is only one mode of success in the line of ambition or riches, that therefore all other kinds of intellectual eminence are idle and empty. — A very large portion of the mass of mankind are not destined either to pursue ambition, or to seek riches. — They have to live upon the plenty, or the competence, which their lot has bestowed upon them: and they are at leisure to enlighten or adorn their situation by wider principles of truth, and more disinterested views of what surrounds them, than those who are following by detestable chichanery their own private benefit. —

To such persons an *ideal* world is infinitely more desirable to be cultivated, than a cold and dull adherence to hard reality. — In their intercourse with *business* indeed it will not do: because *business* cannot with *impunity* assume that mankind are better than they are; nor lay aside that suspicion and severe enquiry, of which the absence is sure to be taken advantage of. —



It raises an irresistible inference that it is not the intention of our nature, that we should always be thinking of ourselves, and our own affairs and interests, — when we consider, that no mind of sensibility, generosity, and virtue, can continue for any length of time to brood over its own concerns without producing morbid anxiety and diseased enfeeblement or fever of intellect. Relaxation, and a change to subjects less intensely personal, always becomes necessary.

If food and amusement are wanted for the body, — what does *he* deserve who finds food and amusement for the mind? —

Yet men who devote themselves to these honourable services, are neglected, despised, and calumniated. —

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13 Sept.

The Mob are apt to say, that Books teach us nothing *practical*, — nothing which enables us to *act* better. — Many books do not, — because they are *bad* books, — written by unsound and false minds; — which are specious, but not wise; — which deal in charlatanic frippery, either from vanity, or mistaken power, or mercenary desire to obtain money by pampering the corrupt appetites of the Public.

But a *good* Book *must* have influence over *action*, as well as *thought*. Yet suppose it had not,— its use is not destroyed. Human Beings are as responsible for a *right mind*, as for a *right conduct*! It is not sufficient that good should be done! — it must be done from *right motives*! The head and the heart must be pure, as well as the hand and the tongue. —

When silly people talk of Poetry as an idle occupation, they do not know what true Poetry is. — Poetry is the highest class of moral philosophy, — animated with life, and enforcing its truths by brilliant, touching, and irresistible eloquence.

The narrowness and selfishness of common and groveling minds tries every one's talents and qualities, by the sole test of the degree of his success in advancing his own personal interests in the world! — But so far as this is a test at all, — it is the test of mean faculties, and a base disposition. — A man's private interests are, in nine cases out of ten, opposite to the principles of truth and virtue.

When once the intellect is directed to watching opportunity, and taking advantage of weakness, carelessness, or torpor, it becomes crooked, and rotten, even if its native tendency and power be good.

Mankind are in general too stupid to see

the use of that, of which the consequences are not direct. They cannot perceive therefore how the wisdom operates, which throws its light *circuitously*, or *from a distance*. —

## CHAPTER CVIII.

### *Sincerity in composition.*

11 July 1823.

All that is said pompously and vainly, goes for nothing. Truth and sincerity at once touch the heart and the understanding.

True Genius has a character impressed upon it by Nature indelibly and irreversibly. Its impressions are positive; not accidental: unattainable by art; and unchangeable by art. A man of mere talent may direct himself by the models which his genius and his wishes choose. Whatever therefore is held best in the reigning day, he naturally desires to imitate: — but this changes; and he has therefore no fixed character.

But what is fixed by nature, even though bestowed on few; is sure to find a mirror in the minds of others who have it not.

« *Each of those illustrious writers* » (Rousseau and Byron,) says the Ed. Rev.<sup>r</sup> N.<sup>o</sup> 60. p. 88, —

« has filled his work with expressions of his  
 » own character, — has unveiled to the world  
 » the secrets of his own Being, — the mysteries  
 » of the framing of man. They have gone down  
 » into those depths which every man may sound  
 » for himself, though not for another; and they  
 » have made disclosures to the world of what they  
 » beheld and knew there; — disclosures that have  
 » commanded and enforced a profound and uni-  
 » versal sympathy, by proving that all mankind,  
 » the troubled, and the untroubled, the lofty  
 » and the low, the strongest and the frailest,  
 » are linked together by the bonds of a com-  
 » mon but inscrutable nature. » — It is said  
 that « crime will out. » — Every one is eased by  
 the confession even of guilt! Both concealment  
 and disguise are always painful. But when one  
 feels a consciousness that one's sentiments and  
 thoughts, though peculiar, are noble or pa-  
 thetic or beautiful, how much more strong  
 is the incitement to communicate them! —

We feel a complacence from having brought  
 our most internal and secret emotions to the  
 test of other men's judgments! — The shyness  
 and sensitiveness of genius often forbids it to  
 do so face to face: — but fortitude returns in  
 the closet; and it can be content to give the pic-  
 ture to the public through the medium of  
 the pen.

If we learn that a Poet, who in his writings affects to describe vivid impressions and strong emotions, does not in reality shew that he is more forcibly struck or more powerfully moved than the generality of mankind, we lose much of the interest we should otherwise have in his compositions: the illusion of reality is lost!—

In the life of a Poet, therefore, it is the relation of these traits of characters, about which we are inquisitive! —

If we find that an author has mingled among mankind in the ordinary way; has accustomed himself to ordinary occupations; and seems to have had only ordinary and vulgar feelings, we lose or diminish our belief of his genius.

To suppose that a man can imagine strong feelings attached to an invented character, and yet not have them associated with the images of his own actual experience, appears to the eye of reason an inconsistency and absurdity.

To give a narration of what goes beyond the surface of life is perhaps difficult. It requires acute observation to discover; and frankness and courage to relate. When an author tells of himself, not what he is, but what he wishes to *seem to be*, he furnishes no materials to the philosophy of the human mind: when he speaks of what *is*, he supplies facts; his opinion may easily be mistaken as

to what it is *desirable* to *be*! — If he is sincere, and gives an unvarnished story, he need not be afraid: for the movements of the human heart are uniform; and there are numerous points in which nature acts on a common principle, in all! —

« But many poets of great imagination, and » invention » (it may be said) « have left no » records of strong personal emotions! » — This may be because they may not have accustomed themselves to embody in language and preserve by the pen that part of their mental workings! — It could not have happened that they were *free* from such mental workings. —

But it may be asked if these emotions are desirable, or subjects of boast? — And if tranquility and self-possession be not a much better gift? For those who are destined to go thro' life as passive and negative characters it may be: not for those who are called to act a part of dominion and preeminence.

The uniform consent of mankind has conferred admiration on those who feel vividly, and think forcibly! —

But they must think without extravagance or exaggeration: for *these* are not real genius. They are the false strainings after *effects*, which spring from weakness. —



## CHAPTER CIX.

*Progress of Poetry.*

5 Nov. 1823.

GRAY in his celebrated Ode, *The Progress of Poesy*, traces this progress «*from Greece to Italy, and from Italy to England.*» He adds in a Note, that «*Chaucer was not unacquainted with the writings of Dante or of Petrarch. The Earl of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt had travelled in Italy, and formed their taste there: Spenser imitated the Italian writers: Milton improved on them: but this school expired soon after the Restoration; and a new one arose, on the French model, which has subsisted ever since.*»

This is true: but it is so brief, as to omit some necessary subdivisions. Milton did not follow the same department of the Italian school as Spenser, who followed Ariosto while Milton followed Dante.

At the same time the minor English Poets of the first half of the seventeenth century, such as Carew, Herrick, Lovelace, Stanley, followed the school of minor Italian poets, who had endeavoured, however imperfectly, to form themselves on the school of Petrarch.

These mixed the materials of true poetry

with metaphysical conceits; and thus alternately produced passages of light and darkness. Such conceits were occasional in Petrarch: they were the *essence* of the ingredients most sought and valued by his successors. And thus it was that many supposed *rivals* of Petrarch were subsequently raised among his countrymen, whom weak critics endeavoured to persuade the Public for a little while to have even excelled him. This has, indeed, been the case in all ages of literature. When a great Genius appears, and attracts the attention of his country, imitators copy faults; and not merits.

## CHAPTER CX.

*Poetry, not an art of words.*

21 Oct. 1823.

Fashion has changed the Art of Poetry into an Art of wonder-making words: and the multitude is so pleased with this change, that it is furious against whoever impugns it.

But Poetry is the Art, which animates the past or absent events of human Beings with life; invests them with interesting circumstances; or assuming the facts as known, describes the feelings or imaginings suited to them in metrical language adapted to the *lyre*.

Such has been the natural origin of the *Epic*; and such, of the *Ode*, or *Song*. — As in advancing literature these compositions became more technical, the primary ingredients and objects became more and more eclipsed by the substitutes and accessaries, till at length the substance and matter was forgotten; and all merit was deemed to depend on the *language*; that is, on the glitter or surprise of the dress.

One word too much, one word of cumbersome cloathing, is a detraction from genius, or from the object of true poetry. All illustration which outshines that which is intended to be illustrated, withdraws the attention from that on which it is the object to fix it.

There is a transparent eloquence arising from force and beauty of thought, of which the least artifice, the least mark of study or labour, destroys the spell. Whatever is recondite therefore, is repugnant to the charm of this transparent eloquence. The effect of life, of present imagery, is instantaneous impression: not that which is evoked by slow operations of the intellect.

*Tales* are the native subjects of poetry: these do not shut out its more spiritual parts; but give, on the contrary, the best opportunities for the display of them. Where the imaginative presence of objects by raising strong emotion gives an accompanying depth of colour to the diction

in which they are related, a style rich and glowing is produced naturally, and without effort.

But all the arts, by which this style is attempted to be imitated, produce for the most part empty and unaffecting sounds. No imitator knows where to be rich, and where to be plain: the natural and unborrowed feeling can alone teach it: and this can only be inspired by the vivacity of intellectual vision which results from an innate force of imaginative power. Gaudy language is poetry only to the eye, and ear; and not to the mind, or heart. It neither enlightens the understanding; nor awakens sympathy.

Wherever a Poet describes what is *actually present*, the poetry can consist only in the *expression*; — the *subject matter* is not an imagination, but a reality; and therefore not a *creation*.

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## CHAPTER CXI.

*Analysis of the faculties of poetical genius.*

30 Oct. 1823.

1. If the organs of *Sense* are clear, the human perception of outward objects is proportionally lively.

2. If the emotion of pleasure or pain from the perception is strong, there is *sensibility of heart*.

3. If the mind observes, reflects, and reasons justly upon the subject, there is *understanding*.

4. If after the outward object is removed, the impression of it still remains before the mind's eye as lively as when the object was actually present, there is *fancy*.

5. If that impression continues long the same, when an interval of time has elapsed since the removal of the outward object, or can be recalled exactly in the same state, there is *memory*.

6. If the images of fancy, which represent the forms of outward impressions, can be combined by the mind so as to create *new forms* by *new arrangement* of parts drawn from different images, and yet preserve a probability and union of character, there is *imagination*.

7. If a power of language exists sufficient to express adequately these images such as they appear to the eye of such a mind, there is *literary genius*.

8. If the images are grand, tender, or beautiful, *they* are of *a poetical character*.

9. If the adequate language which presents itself for images of any one of these qualities, associated with these operations of the mind or heart, is thrown into metrical arrangement, the person so qualified is *a poet*.

If all these qualities then are separately and distinctly admitted to be possessed by an author, can any one deny that he is entitled to the credit of possessing a *poetical genius*? Perhaps it will be urged, that they may be all possessed, yet all in too *faint* a degree to produce more than *mediocrity*; — and that then they are of no value, — because we know from Horace's authority what it is

*Mediocribus esse poetis.*

It can scarcely, however, be admitted that an assemblage of such qualities will not go beyond *mediocrity*: the cooperation will produce a general strength; the strong will aid the weak, if some of the qualities should be weakly possessed. To suppose them all possessed, yet all faint, and all in an equal degree of faintness, is too improbable a supposition. It is indeed to deny, what has been already required to be conceded as a *datum*.

But it is worthy of remark, that while the credit of such poetical genius has been sparingly and hesitatingly allowed to persons possessed of all these qualities, it has been profusely lavished on many who possessed only *one* or *two* of the most *prominent* of these qualities: — such as fancy, or imagination; — without sensibility of heart, force of understanding,



taste, judgment, or command of just, and polished, or metrical language.

This arises from the gross perceptions and bad taste of the multitude, who prefer what is striking and exaggerated to the grace, polish, harmony, and perfection, which result from just proportions.

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## CHAPTER CXII.

*Pursuits of Genius as virtuous and justifiable, as those of more active life.*

8 Nov. 1823.

If all our life is to consist of active duties; if it be not the permitted destiny of some of us to while away our stay here in innocent amusements, what multitudes are wandering in wrong paths! — To some privileged Beings it seems allotted to seek to enjoy those properties of our existence, which are gratified by the grandeur and beauty of the Creation around us. It is not necessary that all mankind should enter into a conflict of interests, and pursue the path either of ambition, or private enrichment.

There are many, on whom Nature has implanted the intrinsic love of magnificence, pro-

portion, delicacy, harmony, and tenderness, independent of ulterior ends; without reference to usefulness, and antecedent to the graduated dictates of reason. The indulgence, improvement, and disciplined augmentation of this love, may be a due fulfilment of part of our earthly destination. A sensibility to the scenery of inanimate Nature, enlivened by that which is animate, is itself a virtue. It cannot be questioned that its exercise purifies, refines, and warms the heart.

I never cease to admire the following exquisite passage of *Campbell*, in his critique on *Beattie's* poetry.

« *It is the solitary growth of the genius of EDWIN* », (the Minstrel,) « *and his isolated and mystic abstraction from mankind, that fix our attention on the romantic features of his genius. — Instead of mingling with the troubles which deface creation, he only existed to make his thoughts the mirror of its beauty and magnificence.* »

Whatever enlightens our minds, and teaches us a proper estimate of the possessions and pursuits of the world, is at once a source of present complacence, and a guide to the future. Error, doubt, confusion of thought, are all painful at the moment, and mischievous in their effects. There are thousands of unnecessary

perplexities, anxieties, and regrets, which rectitude of intellect and clearness of reflection are capable of throwing aside. That, which does not confine happiness to external circumstances, but places it in the Mind, is most consolatory to the varied outward conditions of Humanity, of which it often happens that no personal exertions or virtues can alter the course and destiny. —

It is quite impossible that a view of things, which limits happiness to riches, and rank, and worldly success, can be true; — because it would make the dispensations of Providence unequal and unjust; inasmuch as they would be partial and confined to a few persons.

He, who cultivates and enjoys pure, refined, and disinterested pleasures himself, and has the talent and exertion to elicit and encourage them in others, is a public benefactor. If some are born to act, many more are born to endure; — and oblivious antidotes to care, sorrow, and pain, are inestimable.

The faculties, which provide for the necessities of mankind, which are fitted to the common business of life, are coarse, and hard. Nice and highly-constituted powers feel an impatience and revolt at such employment; as sharp-edged instruments are turned by *a block* of wood. What are deemed genius and talents

therefore would be weaknesses, if the proof of the real existence of these qualities were to depend on worldly skill and success.

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## CHAPTER CXIII.

*Writings of borrowers useless, cumbersome, and due to the fire.*

8 Nov. 1823.

As in our late stage of literature, the occupation of mercenary authorship has greatly increased, the number of mechanical writers has unproportionally augmented beyond those possessed of original powers. Many reasons may be assigned for this: when men work for hire, their business is to fill the greatest space in the shortest time: and memory can perform this service much more rapidly than original thinking; while what is thus produced, is probably more palatable to the mass of readers. What is trite, is easy of conception: the reader's understanding and prejudices are prepared for it: its very dilution in the act of transfer perhaps makes it more pleasant to the weak intellects, which would feel a distaste to it in its native vigour.

But the tendency which it has to discourage genius and leading talent, by causing them to

be confounded with comparatively mean gifts and mean acquirements, which neither obtain nor deserve the respect and admiration necessary to excite and nourish the exhausting fires of high capacity and due effort, operates to deteriorate from year to year the force and general character of the literature of the country where it prevails. Sincerity is sacrificed to mere plausible pretensions; and the press becomes the vehicle of every sort of sophistry and emptiness; and is mainly occupied as the instrument of self-interest, intrigue, and faction; and of deluding the public mind.

When men wrote for fame, and not for money, they generally wrote from innate capacity; and had neither the same interest, nor the same propensity to disguise.

It were well if all the repetitions, and repetitions of repetitions, with which the warehouses of printers and booksellers groan, were swept into the consuming fire, — even if they were accurate: But they are often not only copies, but inaccurate and blundering copies.

There are innumerable persons, who, adding memory to a quick conception and command of language, can borrow and repeat what others draw from the sources of their own intellect: but having nothing infix'd so as to become a part of themselves, they have no *convictions*:

— and without the author's convictions what guard have we against his sophistries? or his repetitions of sophistries?

To make an original writer, it is not necessary that his opinions should never have been expressed by others: but it is necessary that *he* should not have *borrowed* them from others: they must be the result of the workings of his own mind applied to materials collected by himself. In such concurrence with others, is the test of truth; but not of derivation.

Still if what is said, is said badly and imperfectly when others have said it well, the author affords a proof of his inferiority, though not of being a borrower.

Penetrating and experienced critics know in a moment what is original by its very manner; — by its simplicity; — its clearness; — its freshness; — its mastery over the subject.

## CHAPTER CXIV.

### *Originality.*

10 Nov. 1823.

What was been said in the last Chapter about *originality* may require a little more elucidation. The common meaning, which the Multitude affix to the word, is certainly the production of



something which has not been said before; — something *positively new*. If this were the true meaning, it would exclude at least nine tenths of the finest passages of *Shakespeare* from the character of originality; — of which one grand merit is their marvelous consent with the universal experience of mankind.

*Shakespeare's originality* consists in deriving his thoughts, sentiments, and imagery, from the sources of his own intellect, bosom, and fancy; and his *merit*, in conceiving them with more force, and expressing them with more power and beauty, than others. If the same impressions and convictions had not occurred to others, the chances are that the major part of them would not have been just.

Pope says,

« *True wit is nature to advantage dress'd ;  
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd ;  
Something, whose truth convinced at sight we find,  
That gives us back the image of our mind.* »

Though this is not a definition of *wit*, as we now use *that word*, it is a definition of good writing; and of what is the fruit of *original genius*. There is, it must be admitted, some little imperfection in wording it, because it is open to the interpretation that the whole merit lies in the *expression*, and that it would admit a trite thought, borrowed from others.

But this was not Pope's meaning. Pope, I doubt not, intended to convey a position much more conformable to the observation contained in a celebrated passage of *Johnson* at the end of his *Life of Gray*.

« *The CHURCHYARD*, (says *Johnson*) *abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo. The four stanzas beguining, « Yet e'en these bones ,» are to me original: I have never seen the notions in any other place ; yet he that reads them here persuades himself that he has always felt them. »*

It is true that *Johnson* is here speaking of an *originality*, in which there is *novelty*. Yet when the thought is just, the reader at least *persuades himself* that he has thought the same before, but could not express it. One province of genius then is to be able to bring out the more imperfect, more dim, and more buried stores of weaker minds, by the faculty of clearer and stronger conception, and more adequate and impressive language. This may be done by those who conceive and express, what genius has conceived and expressed before; — but never can be done by borrowers; for the borrower is himself the *patient*, not the *agent*.

As it is of the essence of a genuine production of genius, that it should find a mirror

in other minds, so the eager pursuit of positive novelty is always on the verge of offending against this requisite.

An easy, trifling, thought cannot claim merit merely because it is not derivative. The thought must have some weight; some depth; and must convey some light. Where, though original, it is not new, but has been expressed by other authors, it must be such, as, being exposed to difference of acceptation among inferior understandings, requires the sanction of the *concurrence* of those which are most able.

It seems then that if some critics, when they speak of *originality*, mean what has been *neither expressed, nor thought before*; others, *though thought, not expressed*; others again, *though both thought and expressed, not so well expressed*; they are all too narrow in the limits they fix to the use of this word, when applied to the productions of literary genius.

Suppose we should meet in the pages of Cowley, Addison, or Johnson, some interesting moral opinion exactly concurrent with one already to be found in *Bacon's Essays*: yet bearing the clear marks from internal evidence, from the train of thought, the form of words, the raciness, the force, that it took its origin from the native workings of the author's own mind, is the value or merit of such an opinion

destroyed, or its claim to originality extinguished, because something similar had already been given by Bacon, — even admitting that the later writer has reached no superiority of expression over Bacon?

Johnson says, of the morality of *Gray's* « Ode on Spring » that though « *natural, it is too stale.* » If this be true, it is objectionable: what is *stale*, ought not to be repeated, even though it spring from the unprompted movements of the author's own bosom. But I think that it is not true: at least an extraordinary beauty of expression redeems it from this stigma: the train of thought is select and lucid: and the plaintive tone of breathing sentiment is exquisitely touching. The morality therefore, in the attitudes in which it is placed, in the scenery with which it is associated, and in the mellow hues which are thrown upon it, is *not stale*.

No poet has suffered under the hands of criticism from wrong and narrow notions of what constitutes *originality*, more than Gray. Campbell<sup>(1)</sup> seems in part, though not entirely, to agree with the opinion which I entertain on this point regarding him. Gray reversed the common practice of borrowers. They generally attempt to

(1) *Specimens*, vol. vi. p. 190.

disguise the theft of *thought* by putting it in a new dress of *language*; in which however the effort at variation is almost always more laboured than successful. It strikes me, that Gray's thoughts are, for the most part, *his own*; but his excessive anxiety to enrich and finish, and add art to nature, prompts him, more often than is quite desirable, to resort to the finest gems of his predecessors to adorn his own brilliant style with a «*dazzling excess of light.*» He, who borrows from poverty, never unites: he disjoins, and combines with equal infelicity. He mistakes dislocation, and new and unsuited position, for novelty of creation: he takes to pieces; but cannot reunite so as to give life and nature.

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## CHAPTER CXV.

*Critique on two of Gray's Odes.*

13 Nov. 1823.

An allegorical Image is a species of Fiction: it is a personification, an embodiment of an abstract quality. *Gray's Ode on Eton College* is made up of these images. But *poetic Fiction* means also *Invention*: and Invention must be *original*: and is one of these figures of Gray



*original?* — I think not: all their attributes consist of obvious and known epithets. — It is then in the grouping and choice, — in the combination, — that the Invention consists. — It is a choice, which could only be dictated by the light of Fancy, kindled and augmented by emotion. Fancy alone would not have presented such extensive and contrasted views: for reality exhibits no such images in combination. Gray therefore brought before him this rich and affecting picture by the force of the *creative faculties* of his mind: the picture, such as he presents, was beyond what mere observation and experience could supply: or if they could supply, could only supply in detached views, — separated by time and place; and not grouped together. It was an act therefore of powerful Imagination, or Fiction, to shew them in union, contrasting and relieving each other.

There is something *defective* in the essence, the first conception, of the «*Progress of Poesy.*» — The «Lyre» ought to have been a person, — a Muse; — an *active*, not a *passive*, object. — The «*Progress*» depends, not on the Lyre itself, but on the characters of the persons thro' whose hands it passes; and this destroys all unity; for though a single object is addressed, and is intended to form the topic of consideration and celebration, all the interest and all the



spring of action depends neither on that object, nor on any *one* other object; but on a succession of extraneous objects unconnected with each other. It is not the character of the *Lyre*, from which the effects are deduced; — but the character of those *who act upon it*. —

It may be said that an inherent character in the *Lyre* is *implied*, without which the *actors* could not draw such effects from it: but this is a gratuitous assumption: all the effects deduced spring from the characters of the *actors*.

No such fault is to be found in Collins's *Ode to the Passions*. There the *actors*, *not* the *Lyre*, are the proposed subjects of the Poem.

Perhaps it will be replied, that *Collins* has in view to relate the effects of the Passions on the *Lyre*: and *Gray*, the effects on third persons, of what is produced by the *Lyre*; — so that the *Lyre* is itself the *actor* in the latter case, tho' only *derivatively*. But a secondary agent ought not to have been preferred to a moving principal: and *Gray* himself felt the inadequacy of the *passive* instrument, when in the 2.<sup>d</sup> and 3.<sup>d</sup> stanza of the 2.<sup>d</sup> Ternary, he himself changed the « *Lyre* » into a « *Muse*. »



## CHAPTER. CXVI.

*Metaphysical Poetry.*

13 Nov. 1823.

English Poetry has never entirely recovered from its metaphysical habits. From the principle of representing matter thro' its spiritual reflections, it grew to deal exclusively in spiritual representations. Material imagery was only used as illustrative of spirit; and not as a principal.

Hence came the poetry of *language*, and not of *matter*. — The thought was the fruit of the understanding: — the fancy and imagination were in the *dress*. — Labour, industry, discipline, learning, and art, now superseded genius; and no poet relied on the gifts of nature, and the unsought energies of the mind.

Fiction in its simple and obvious meaning began to be forgot; and imagination, which was taken to be synonymous, was substituted as an accessory; and not as a principal. —

A new order of Poets therefore was now called forth; and there was a requisition for a different class of faculties.

I am inclined, however, to believe, that strong natural genius acts in defiance of all artificial restraints and temporary fashions.

## CHAPTER CXVII.

*True nature of Poetry.*

14 Nov. 1823.

Nothing tends so certainly and clearly to a distinct and uniform understanding of the true nature of *Poetry*, as a constant regard to the true and strict meaning of the word by which it is denominated. —

Ποιησις is CREATION. I think this word implies a good deal more than a mere embodiment, in rhythmical language, of images impressed on the *fancy* from *external objects*. — It means Imagination: viz. a combination made within the Author's own mind, by the activity and force of his own faculties: — and it is this, which gives it the character of *invention*, or *creation*.

This is also the proper and strict sense of *Fiction*: but Fiction in a looser sense may be, (or rather is,) applied to the productions of Fancy: tho' images, which already exist in the *Fancy*, cannot quite accurately be said to be *feigned*, or *created*.

However, as it is scarcely possible for an image to be received into the fancy, without the mind adding something to it, or subtracting something from it, the stores of fancy are

always mingled, more or less, with the fruits of Imagination: and therefore every production of fancy, is more or less a fiction, or creation.

But the degree of Fiction is in proportion to the degree of the prevalence of Imagination, or Invention: and by this standard must the poetical character of a composition be rated.

The simple junction of the approximating and consentaneous materials of pure fancy, is but a weak effort of imagination. — Rich Fiction is complex in its combinations: to bring together ingredients remote in their native position, and varied and distinct in their quality, is the test of the creative power. To join matter and spirit, image and sentiment; to associate the visible with the ideal; — to spiritualise matter, and embody spirit; — *hic labor, hoc opus est!* This is Fiction; — this is to create new forms, and cast into them new minds! This is to invent a *new* «ELOISA,» — and a *new* «BARD,» according to the Poet's own visionary and fiery notions! —

All minor poets introduce minor degrees of this sort of fiction, or invention: — but mere versifiers have none of it. —

Yet tho' mind and spirit must be greatly prevalent in all high invention, there can be no poetical creation without a mixture of matter

or imagery: therefore *metaphysical* subjects can never be poetical, except in the language, dress, and illustrations: and that can never be perfect poetry, where the poetry lies only in the *accessary*; and *not* in the *principal*. —

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## CHAPTER CXVIII.

*A good Fable of primary necessity to constitute primary poetry.*

15 Nov. 1823.

The highest class of Poetry cannot be reached, where there is not a FABLE: and therefore short poems, including *Odes*, seem almost, if not entirely, excluded from the highest class. I say *almost*, because it is possible, (though barely possible,) to compress a *Fable* within the limits of an *Ode*.

But a good Fable, well designed, will not do alone, unless there be also powerful execution; — unless the parts be richly and happily filled up. On the contrary, an ill design may sometimes be rendered attractive by a felicitous finish of the details.

There is, perhaps, but one Fable in the world, which is equally grand and symmetrical in the design, and perfect in the execution:

and that is MILTON'S *Paradise Lost*. It results from this, that the author is entitled to stand at the head of all human Poets.

He is not fitted to be popular: — but his inadaptation to popularity arises from his excellence. How is it possible that any thing so exalted, so profound, so ethereal, in which Nature and Art have combined to do their utmost, should be within the taste, or the reach, of vulgar conceptions?

## CHAPTER CXIX.

*Edward Phillips's Opinion of the FABLE proper for an Heroic Poem.*

15 Nov. 1823.

EDWARD PHILIPS, the nephew of Milton, in the admirable Preface to his *Theatrum Poetarum*, 1675, 12.<sup>o</sup> (1) expresses himself thus on the subject of the choice and conduct of the Fiction proper to constitute an Heroic Poem. It seems to me to designate so many material points of poetical creation, in so just and at the same

(1) A Selection from this scarce book, containing Phillips's *Characters of the English Poets, till the death of Q. Elizabeth*, (with many additions,) was reprinted by the present Author in 1800. 8.<sup>o</sup>



time so brief, yet so comprehensive, a manner, that it would be well, if our modern poets and modern critics could always keep it in mind.

« *It is not,* » says he, « *a mere historical relation, spiced over with a little slight fiction, now and a Personated Virtue or Vice rising out of the ground, and uttering a speech, which makes a HEROIC POEM: but it must be rather a brief, obscure, or remote tradition; — but of some remarkable piece of story, — in which the POET hath an ample field to enlarge by feigning of probable circumstances, in which, and in proper Allegory, INVENTION, (the well-management whereof is indeed no other than decorum,) principally consisteth; and wherein there is a kind of truth, even in the midst of Fiction. For whatever is pertinently said by way of Allegory, is morally though not historically true; and circumstances, the more they have of verisimilitude, the more they keep up the reputation of the Poet, whose business it is to deliver feigned things as like to truth as may be; that is to say, not too much exceeding apprehension, or the belief of what is possible, or likely; or positively contradictory to the truth of history!* »

By Phillips's standard therefore, (and this must be taken to have been Milton's standard,) the monstrous and extravagant must be excluded

from all poetic fiction which aspires to excellence. *Verisimilitude* is an essential quality.

We do not wonder that the Mob, when they seek to have their imaginations gratified, require violent and unnatural incitements. To be moved by proportion, simplicity, delicacy, and touches of exquisite fineness, requires native sensibility improved and heightened by long cultivation and comparison. No rude, uneducated, and inexperienced eye admires the beautiful composition and mellow tints of the schools of antient Painters, the Raffaels, Corregios, Guidos, *etc.*, half so much as a modern daub, glaring with new and unchaste colours, and outraging all the symmetry and harmony of nature. « *He that forsakes the probable,* » says Johnson, « *may always find the marvellous.* »

But understanding *marvellous*, as Johnson here understands it, in an invidious and reprehensible sense, what appears marvellous in one age is not, (at least in the same degree,) marvellous in another. Many things which appear objectionably marvellous in the *Fairy Queen*, might not appear so in Queen Elizabeth's reign. But a poet, who builds on opinions of temporary prevalence, must take the consequence, and not complain if « *he plucks a deciduous laurel.* » The poet, who aspires to

immortal fame, must build on opinions of universal extent, and perpetual duration.

## CHAPTER CXX.

*The notice of what is great can seldom be new.*

19 Nov. 1823.

Johnson in his criticism on *Metaphysical poetry*, in his *Life of Cowley*, says that «*those writers who lay on the watch for novelty, could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation.*»

The love of novelty is always the passion of false genius. It is the desire to excite attention by undue means. A deep and forcible thinker may by extraordinary felicity produce what is at once just and new: but a rational hope can only be placed in arriving at a concurrence, (in the midst of conflicting opinions,) with the thoughts and sentiments of the wisest heads and the most virtuous bosoms.

There is however a great temptation to pursue novelty. The notice of the Public is seldom first gained but by novelty: though that notice will never be retained long, except where the novelty is founded in truth.



## CHAPTER CXXI.

*What is unborrowed, need not be positively new; but must be neither stale, nor trifling.*

20 Nov. 1823.

Is it not sufficient to say things better than others have said them; — or to rise to a par with the eminent, without having borrowed from them? — But what is the proof of not having borrowed? Let it be left to the honest judgment of taste and quick perception! The tests will make instantaneous impression; — and the impression will seldom err.

Of what is trite or stale, the repetition can never have interest or use. But there are innumerable opinions and sentiments, which, though expressed before, have been but *rarely* embodied in language; — and only by gifted authors: — these will bear to be enforced again; and to have other recorded testimonies of consent to them.

There are thousands, and thousands perhaps many times told, who can *judge*, for one who can *originate*. But he who *judges* with the best, is too apt to think himself superior to an *originator* of a subordinate class.



## CHAPTER CXXII.

*English Poets, who have written prose.*

20 Nov. 1823.

The number of Poets, who have written PROSE, is very limited. We have in England Spenser, Milton, Cowley, Habington, Dryden, Addison, Pope, Lyttelton, Johnson, Goldsmith, Thomas Warton, Beattie: — and here perhaps the list may end.

But it is to the glory of poetry, that the best style of Prose in our language is to be found among these: for who will deny the palm of excellence, in the style of English prose, to Cowley, Dryden, and Addison?

It is not improbable that the lively mind of poets, inasmuch as it gives more of the force of nature to the thoughts, entangles itself less in the technicalities of diction: for it is the labour of art which renders a style heavy and corrupt; and which falls into temporary fashions, that change with every succeeding generation.

Superficial critics may suppose that a *poet* is likely to fall into a *florid* style. A florid style consists either of excessive ornament; or, ornament in wrong places. (1) A true poetical mind

(1) The charge of *floridness* has therefore been most inappositely, falsely, and ignorantly, applied to *Burke*.



never does this : the energy of its thoughts is the security against this fault : it is vacancy, or weakness, which seeks the disguise of over-ornament : real vigour, carried forward by the rapidity of its own motion, has not leisure to stop to seek it. Of men aspiring to be authors, he who thinks powerfully, will almost always write powerfully ; and it can scarcely happen that one can write powerfully without a good style. An useful book may be written illustrative of a particular subject, without great talents ; and here the value of the matter may overcome the defects of style : but to develop and communicate adequately general truths, requires general abilities ; and these can scarcely exist without attaching to them a good style.

What is general and essential, can be separated from its concomitants ; and yet lose nothing of its force or use : but of how few authors can the matter be thus dealt with ! — The herd of writers produce only what derives its worth from its position and particular applicability ! Their productions are like highly-wrought plate, in which the quantity of sterling ore is small ; and of which the price has

When his style became rich and figurative, it arose out of the subject ; and flowed naturally, and almost necessarily, from the warmth of the thought.



chiefly arisen from the workmanship applied to the form and fashion; a value not transmutable, but dependent exclusively on its existing shape.

The number of classical compositions in the English language illustrative of Moral Philosophy, which have been able to survive the fashion of the day, and stand the test of Time, may be compressed into a very few volumes. This can only be accounted for by the assumption that such compositions require a degree of genius scarcely inferior to that of poetry.

Let it be examined, what authors, (with the exception of poets,) furnish positions of general truth to be cited on such occasions; and the accuracy of this remark will not be doubted.

The reason of this it may not perhaps be so difficult to penetrate. It is by the force of imagination, that the mind brings before it the extensive array of materials, from which general truths can be deduced.





known, (1) but who shewed great taste in that Collection,) says justly in his Preface « *there is scarcely a topic common with other writers on which he has not excelled them all: there are many nobly peculiar to himself, where he shines unrivalled, and like the eagle, properest emblem of his daring genius, soars beyond the common reach, and gazes undazzled on the Sun.* » —

I cite this passage, because it seems to me to agree with the positions I have laid down in the preceding Chapters: for here Shakespeare's excellence is not placed merely on novelty and peculiarity, but in having expressed what had been already said, better than it had been said before.

But so it is, that this inspired poet has an indefinable charm, even when what he says is sufficiently obvious, and is not expressed with any peculiarity of elegance or force. To make myself understood, I will cite an instance.

#### ON FORTUNE.

« *Will Fortune never come with both hands full,  
But write her fair words still in foulest letters?  
She either gives a stomach; and no food; —  
Such are the poor, in health; — or else a feast,  
And takes away the stomach; — such are the rich,  
That have abundance, and enjoy it not.* » (2)

(1) D.<sup>r</sup> Dodd.

(2) Second Part of K. Hen. iv.

I know not whence this mysterious charm arises; unless it be from the raciness of the style, as if the remark sprung from individual impression, and immediate sensation.

I will add another, because it has been copied by a modern poet, in a passage which is in every one's mouth, as if it was peculiar to the last.

————— «*So it falls out,*  
*That what we have, we prize not to the worth,*  
*Whiles we enjoy it; but being lack'd and lost,*  
*Why, then we rack the value, then we find*  
*The virtue, that possession would not show us,*  
*Whiles it was ours.*» (1)

Cowper in his TASK says,

————— «*Not to know a treasure's worth,*  
*Till time has stolen away the slighted good,*  
*Is cause of half the misery we feel.*»

The following highly-poetical and almost unrivalled passage is of a different kind; and shews in what school Milton, Gray, and Collins, studied their language.

FAIRIES AND MAGIC.

«*Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and*  
*groves;*  
*And ye, that on the sands with printless foot*

(1) Much Ado about Nothing.

*Do chase the ebbing Neptune , and do fly him  
 When he comes back ; you demi-puppets , that  
 By moon-shine do the green-sour ringlets make ,  
 Whereof the ewe not bites ; and you , whose pastime  
 Is to make midnight-mushrooms ; that rejoice  
 To hear the solemn curfew ; by whose aid  
 ( Weak masters though you be , ) I have bedimm'd  
 The noontide sun , call'd forth the mutinous winds ,  
 And twixt the green-sea and the azured vault  
 Set roaring war : to the dread rattling thunder  
 Have I given fire , and rifted Jove's stout oak  
 With his own bolt : the strong-based promontory  
 Have I made shake ; and by the spurs plucked up  
 The pine and cedar ; graves at my command  
 Have waked their sleepers ; oped , and let them forth  
 By my so potent art . » (1)*

In the fifth and sixth lines of this passage we are reminded of a passage of Cowley; who yet has made an original, quite different, and felicitous application of the image. Speaking of poetical pursuits, that new and profound thinker says with inimitable beauty,

*« Where once such Fairies dance , no grass doth  
 ever grow . »*

(1) Twelfth Night.

## CHAPTER CXXV.

*Notices of Collins, the Poet.*

21 Nov. 1823.

IN GENT. MAG. Oct. 1823, in a « *Review of Observations on the architecture of Magdalen College, Oxford,* » are a few words which contain a new notice of COLLINS, the poet.

« *We have passed many a delightful evening* » says the Reviewer, « *among its Members* » etc. « *have eaten venison with cotemporaries of Collins the poet; and learned from them that he was a pock-fretted man, with small keen black eyes; associated very little; and was introduced into Magdalen by D.<sup>r</sup> Payne, an uncle, whom he offended by refusing to pay attention to him; and therefore left the University.* »

So little is known of Collins's personal history, that for three-and-forty years I have been in the habit of catching eagerly at every glimpse of him. In GENT. MAG. 1781, were a few original notices of him by one who remembered him, which I read at the time with deep interest and affliction; and which have never since been effaced from my memory. Some years afterwards a few other notices appeared in another Magazine: and these, with what little has been said by *Langhorne* and *Johnson*, are, I believe,



the sum of all that has been recorded of him. Many remembrances of him must long have existed at *Chichester*, his birth-place; and perhaps may still exist in tradition. Why are the inhabitants of that City so supine and insensible as to be silent on the subject? D.<sup>r</sup> *Payne* is an uncle, of whom I have not heard before. Another uncle, whom Johnson calls Col. *Martin*, is called Col. *Martin Bladen* by D.<sup>r</sup> Joseph Warton, if I recollect right. (1)

An enthusiastic admiration of Collins, which began in me in very boyhood, has in no degree decayed under the freezing effects of age. I never will believe any one a proper poet, who is not a poet in his *heart*, as well as in his *head*: to whom Imagination is not the mistress, rather than the casual and indifferent associate.

The Reason may be able by great effort and long-continued exercise to subdue a strong Imagination; — but it will at the same time subdue and extinguish the poetical power. Collins gave himself up to the inspirations of the Muse: his habits therefore were eccentric;

(1) Collins's father was a *hatter*. Let not the obscurity of their station deprive those, whose blood he inherited, of the notice to which the reflection of his genius entitles them!

and the fire blazed too strongly for the strength of the material part of his Being.

Johnson in his character of this celebrated man, with whom he lived some years in the intimacy of affectionate friendship, has contrived to express great praise in such a manner, as to have the effect of depreciation. If we examine what are the qualities which the Critic bestows on him, we shall find that he ascribes to him « *vigorous faculties* », « *extensive literature* ; » « *pure morals* ; » « *pious opinions* ; » « *wisdom and virtue* ; » — and « *occasional sublimity and splendour* , » in his productions. This is almost all, which the warmest encomiasts of Collins ascribe to him.

Johnson says, that « *he did not sufficiently cultivate sentiment* : » — he did not cultivate the *expression* of sentiment ; but his vivid and impassioned imagery was calculated to awaken sentiment in the *reader's* bosom ; though he left it to raise itself by its own force. His poetry would have been still richer, if he himself had clothed it in language.

Collins's colour and combination of words is, for the most part, his own. This probably arose from the *originality* and *vigour* of his conceptions : he who derives the suggestion of his imagery from others, must derive it through the medium of language : and he cannot after-

wards separate the image from its dress: they are indissolubly identified in his mind.

A factitious poet is no enthusiast: he performs his work as a task; and not *con amore*: an highly-excited temperament would destroy the power to use his tools. What is done by art, is done coolly and deliberately: it arises from painful recollection, and gradual and laborious thought. But enthusiasm awakens the ideas with an instantaneous force, which calls up the words with them.

In the diction of Collins, therefore, I do not recollect any patches of extraneous ornament.

Poets may sometimes have merit of thought, who yet may be deficient in expression: but none can have excellence of expression, who are not at least equally excellent in thought.

## CHAPTER CXXVI.

*Milton little admired by his cotemporaries.*

26 Nov. 1823.

There are a body of authors possessing strong influence over public opinion, who are for obvious reasons extremely anxious to establish the position, that popularity is the test of merit. They are therefore always on the alert

to deny the commonly - received opinion , that MILTON excited little of the admiration or notice of his cotemporaries. But this denial on their part must surely be admitted to be vain and idle , when it is recollected that what they oppose is an *historical fact* : — not a mere matter of opinion. Campbell has very properly noticed , ( and indeed it had long ago been noticed , ) that *Lord Clarendon* says of COWLEY , that « *he had taken a flight above all men in poetry* » while the noble historian does not even name MILTON. If it be said that such an opinion may have arisen from the strong political prejudices of this luminous recorder of the events and characters of his own age , a satisfactory reply may be made by an appeal to the author's unimpeached integrity and veracity ; and the whole tenor of his copious pages , in which he is not in the habit of *omitting* those of a contrary party to him , whenever they have come under his notice , though he may express his strong dissent to their political principles and conduct.

It ought to be recalled to mind , that Lord Clarendon had spent his youth among Poets and Literati ; and had a great ambition of their intimacy. Milton's early poems were published at a period , when this illustrious Chancellor's youthful mind was open to all the charms of Imagination ; and before the dry and thorny paths of

Politics, in the midst of a furious Civil War, could have totally withdrawn his attention from the Muses. It is therefore demonstrative, that these compositions, so picturesque, so rich, so wild, so full of creative imaginings, so fresh from the very well-spring of poetry, neither met the great Lawyer's own taste; nor were obtruded on him by the taste of others.

If bad poetry will not gain favour, where good poetry is to be found, how came *Cowley's* poems to meet with universal applause, and be in universal demand, when *Milton* was allowed to live little noticed, and consoled only by the calm consciousness of his own desert? — I do not mean to depreciate *Cowley*: he was an excellent man; of admirable faculties; of inimitable wit; of vast originality, depth, solidity, and rectitude of thought; of an heart of transparent frankness and purity; and one of the most elegant, (if not the most elegant,) prose-writers of our language: — but that poetry of his, which Lord Clarendon says, *took a flight above all other* of his time, is deficient in all the prime qualities of poetry.

If then Lord Clarendon was so mistaken in taste, may there not be great men in our days, whose opinions in poetical composition may prove to have been equally worthless? — There is but one certain test, — the test of time; and



a reference to the model of those works which have continued the favourites of successive ages. *Novelty* may perhaps be pronounced to be an *indispensible ingredient* in the sources of temporary popularity: and where this is the most operative source, the popularity cannot from its very nature last: for novelty is ephemeral; and the *future* is death to it.

That, which, while it is new, has also the extraordinary felicity of uniting with its novelty truth and grandeur or beauty, may continue its attractions in right of these latter qualities, when the short day of the former is past. But it often happens, that the novelty which gives the first attraction, becomes afterwards a deformity; and is only endured for the sake of the intrinsic merits with which it is intertwined. It is the sterling sense, and moral sweetness of *Cowley*, which still retains the interest of the intelligent reader, while those eccentric efforts of ill-directed wit, which were the admiration of his cotemporaries, and raised the poet in their estimation into the heaven of Genius, are perused with wondering disapprobation; and are only borne for the sake of the rich ore which is buried in them.

In sciences, mankind may continue to advance with the lapse of Time, because these are labours of gradation: but that which ad-



dresses itself to the universal sense and universal passions of Human Beings, is not to be limited to the taste, or the result of the happier discoveries, of one age or one nation.

Science may have continued to advance from the Fourteenth Century : but have any sources of poetical delight been since discovered, which DANTE did not know ?

## CHAPTER CXXVII.

*On the thirtieth day of November, 1823.*

30 Nov. 1823.

Thirty-nine years ago I expressed in a *Sonnet* the sentiments which the return of this day of the year suggested to me. <sup>(1)</sup> It is natural to compare with it what the experience of this long lapse of time has taught me. But to detail these feelings would be to enter on a field too open to the propensity to Egotism which I must restrain. The first reflection is, what hopes have been fulfilled ? What disappointments have

(1) Beginning « *This thy last day, dark Month,* » etc. written 30 Nov. 1784 : — printed in *Sonnets and other Poems*, published in March 1785. See it reprinted in *Anti-Critic*, p. 185.

been incurred? What ought Timè to have effected? How much, which was then cause of regret, is aggravated by the passage of almost double the number of years which I had then lived?

What is done by labour, requires length of years to bring it to perfection: except in the mechanical and artificial parts of what it has to perform. What depends on strength of impression and vividness of fancy, will be best in youth.

Perhaps therefore it is unreasonable to be discontented that what was not done early, has not been done at all. But what does not depend on labour and time, may yet depend on the fortuitous circumstances of ease and leisure, or difficulties and distraction.

It is true that great works of Imagination have not always been composed in a life of calm and security: witness *The Fairy Queen*, and *Paradise Lost*. Fortitude and self-possession therefore were among the innumerable gigantic qualities of Spenser and Milton. But it is often otherwise: and genius not weak, though far inferior to that of these divine men, may be defeated and paralysed by misfortune.

There are various plausible opinions with regard to the advantages of adopting that regularity and system in the application of the in-

tellectual powers of man, of which inferior minds so much over-estimate the effects. It often happens that an adscititious peculiarity and mannerism is thus contracted, which distorts the judgment, and attributes to the force of truth what is the result of habit.

It is therefore not so much, perhaps, regular and mechanical labour, as unbroken energy at the moment of application, which constitutes strength and power; and ensures success.

An uneasy mind seeks intensity of toil rather for its momentary faculty of producing oblivion of all collateral subjects, than for its future good; and therefore perseveres no longer than while the effort has present interest.

To have ambition, and yet not to be willing to pay the price of ambition, is, in the eye of mankind, a criminal and punishable folly; — even though the unwillingness should arise from the nicety of virtue, and an erroneous trust in the benevolence and integrity of human nature. It is only when man fails after having used all the cunning and caution which *self-interest* dictates, that he is pitied.

A serene, complacent, temper is most fitted to pass through the world without dangers or obstacles: but then it is little capable of producing those intellectual fruits, which strike the imagination by their fire, and move the heart by their pathos.

There is a degree of serenity and exemption from care, which often produces even ennui and torpor; and benumbs the faculties.

It too frequently happens, that in proportion as one, endowed with brilliant gifts of intellect, becomes more a man of the world, he becomes less a man of genius; because knowledge of the world abates his expectations, and freezes his heart. While his general intelligence improves, while his judgment ripens, and his observation becomes more precise, that compression of particular powers which makes a poet, dilutes and evaporates. In society he becomes more skilful, more pliant, more communicative, and more sagacious: his eccentricities are worn away; and peculiarities which, (at least to the common eye,) seemed to border on the absurd, are polished into a conformity with general manners: — but these are amendments, which little mix themselves with his compositions in the closet; and are not transmissible to posterity.

After all, perhaps, neither discipline and labour, nor ease, nor anxiety, nor a state of strong excitement or mental serenity, have much concern with the power or feebleness, the merit or demerit, of the literary productions of genius; — which probably depend almost exclusively on the faculties conferred by Nature:

— subject however to the influence of the accidents which may awaken or suppress the *desire* and *ambition* of excellence in such pursuits. He who chooses to quit the haunts of the Muses for the haunts of public life, the glory of an author for the glory of a politician or a worldling, must not complain, nor regret that he does not acquire that, for which he will neither use the means, nor pay the price.

The advantages to be purchased by literary pursuits are scarcely worth the cost, if those advantages are placed in the attainment of distinction and fame. For these cannot be secured either by Nature, or skilful conduct, or both united. What depends on the public, will always be bestowed by caprice, or folly, or intrigue. But there are other advantages, of a more generous and sublimer kind, in literary pursuits: — the advantages of virtuous occupation and intrinsic pleasure, which combine purity instruction and delight; which give us the complacence and self-confidence of a more elevated order of existence, and raise us in many respects above the frowns of fortune.

A life which directs its labours to public affairs, and the concerns of active business, is more showy and noisy; but not perhaps less subject to disappointments; while it has no similar antidote in the virtue and pleasure of the occupation.



He, who grasps at too much, loses all. I have something of a misgiving, that I am myself an example of this. On the other hand, there is a noble self-devotion in the love of honourable fame: — it would not be implanted in us, were it not a necessary incitement «*to live laborious days*» for the sake of others; if it were not a spur to virtue; — and if to virtue, then to happiness! —

It often happens then that they, who are blamed by others, and who even blame themselves, may yet have taken the right path. But it is vain to demand that youth should have the wisdom which is taught by the experience of age; a wisdom, that almost always comes too late for action. Nor would that wisdom in many instances be desirable: for why should we be assured too early of that sorrow and disappointment, which are our lot on earth? (1) The prosperous are not happy: we could name men loaded with worldly power, honours, and wealth, who have not been happy! Why then should they who have been crossed at every turn, complain? There is a virtue which is independent of success: there are gifts of nature, which caprice, injustice, or malice cannot destroy, or change! There are beautiful glowings

(1) See the last stanza of Gray's *Ode on Eton College*.



of the heart, splendid imaginings, and vigorous textures of thought, of which the possession is too positive, and the richness too admirable to be at the mercy of envy or corrupt intrigue! But we are not to be examined and criticised and censured by mean, groveling, narrow, technical rules; — as if there was not in our better natures a feeling of delight, a sense of greatness, far above the calculations of reason!

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## CHAPTER CXXVIII.

TO BACON.

24 Aug. 1823.

Ill was thy fate, illustrious Bacon! frail  
 E'en though thou wert; (and who of human-kind  
 Dares boast that he is free from frailty?) — thou,  
 Glory pursuing, wert perchance a prey  
 To confidence betray'd! — Imps, who with pale  
 Dissimulation, while thy mighty mind,  
 Intent on inward light, no outward brow  
 Could spare of circumspection, stole away  
 By foul corruption that great name, whose tale  
 Has fill'd the world with pity and with scorn;  
 Bedimm'd thy wondrous course with clouds of  
 night,

Who for a race of «sapphire blaze» wast born;  
 Bade Genius yield to groveling Folly's spite;  
 And o'er th' immortal mind given Dulness to  
 prevail! (1)

## CHAPTER CXXIX.

*Popularity not indispensable to useful authorship.*

3 Dec. 1823.

We know that self-love often deceives us in the estimate of our own qualities: yet is there no test of merit but that of popular favour? If so, there is *no certain* test: for nothing is more proved, than that popular favour is fleeting and changeable. It gives distinction, where there is no desert: it withdraws it from desert after it has conferred it.

Applying this to authors, there are many who contend that, whether the Public be right or wrong, yet without the hope and chance of popularity, it is useless to write. But this is built on the false assumption that the sole legitimate purposes of writing are fame, or lucre. He, who writes to improve himself, or

(1) See the character of BACON defended in the *American Review* (about *April*) 1823.

to employ and amuse himself innocently and virtuously, has an adequate and strictly legitimate purpose. It is true, that his purpose may not be attained; for he may not improve himself, nor be either virtuously occupied, or amused: but this will not depend on the disappointment of popular favour: it will depend on the want of native endowment, and due self-discipline. His own consciousness will sufficiently prove to him this defect, when it exists. Friends will not fail to tell it him; and enemies will never lose the opportunity of finding fault. There is little neutrality in the literary world: what is not praised from caprice or corrupt motives, is almost sure to be censured, where it deserves censure; and very often, where it deserves it not.

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## CHAPTER CXXX.

*Remarks on certain passages in Wordsworth's Prefaces to his Poems, regarding Popularity.*

8 Dec. 1823.

Though I trust that I never read to borrow, yet I am pleased to bring my own thoughts to the test of other men's opinions for the purpose of comparison confirmation or correction.

I have dwelt a good deal in various parts of this volume on the position that *popularity* is not the criterion of merit. Within these two days, the *Prefaces* to WORDSWORTH'S Poems (1) having offered themselves to my perusal, I find this subject treated in them with great profundity, great originality, and irresistible truth. The conclusions, to which the author comes, and which he enforces, are identical with those, of which, after forty years of attention to literature and an anxious consideration of this subject during that long space, I have the most unqualified conviction: but this virtuous, resolute, and enlightened Critic supports his doctrines in detail, and by reasonings and illustrations exclusively his own. It would be more than superfluous, it would be impertinent, for me to copy or extract from a work, which must circulate where mine cannot.

Wordsworth well observes (2), of *popular favourites*, that they who are the favourites of one age are never the favourites of another: but of the *favourites of the Few*, that they who are the favourites of one age, always continue the favourites of another.

This is a complete answer to the only reason

(1) 4 vols. 12.<sup>o</sup> 1820.

2) Vol. III. p. 337.

assigned for relying on the test of popular favour as a proof of merit; viz. its *universality*. If it were universal, if it were founded in the nature of the heart and constitution of Man, it would be the same in one age as in another. It may be inferred therefore, that it arises from accidental fashions and habits, and temporary causes of interest. Men, on whom speculative fancies and sentiments can make little impression, are roused by that, in which they have been practically engaged.

It may seem difficult to reconcile this with a celebrated passage of *Johnson*, (in his *Life of Gray*,) which has been perpetually cited, and generally considered to be just, that «*by the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and dogmatisms of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours.*» — «*The Churchyard*» he goes on, «*abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo.*»

But a little reflection will shew that it is perfectly reconcileable, if we understand this *common sense*, (as in correctness it must be understood,) to mean «*the common sympathies of our nature,*» in opposition to the sense of a man of science, which «*is a personal and*

*individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings.*» (1) This is the *mirror* and the *echo* which Johnson must mean; whether they exist upon the surface, and are readily found; or lie more deep, and require more painful evoking.

Different tasks are assigned to different poets; according to the character and nature of the *Prophetess* on whom they call. To some it is decreed

« *Thrice to pronounce, in accents dread,  
The thrilling verse, that wakes the dead,  
Till from out the hollow ground  
SLOWLY breathe a sullen sound.* » (2)

While others court light laughing *Echoes* ready instantly to obey their call.

How many *Prophetesses* has Wordsworth called, and made hear «*from their beds of rest,*» who never were evoked before! — Who can wonder then if the lore of these *Prophetesses* sometimes appears a little strange? May the poet have by his example taught his successors to wake such oracles in future from their «*iron sleep!*»

(1) Wordsworth, iv. 307. See that noble page, and the next down to the end of the paragraph at p. 309.

(2) Gray's *Descent of Odin*.



It may be asked, why that which finds a difficult reception at first, makes its way by the lapse of time? It is probable that *authority* gradually supersedes imperfect taste, when that authority operates on the young, whom habit has not confirmed in their erroneous impressions and faulty associations. But just authority is itself slow in making its way; comes forward gradually; and is received reluctantly. They who are the least qualified to pronounce judgment, are always the readiest and the first to obtrude it on the Public; and thus a seeming authority for the indulgence of a bad taste precedes the authority for correcting and improving it. Men of deep thought and refined understandings do not float upon the surface of society; are not ready at every call; not easily moved; nor flexible and prompt for every task that may occur to be quickly executed. Periodical Criticism therefore falls into the hands of a more common-place set of writers, whose daily intercourse with the conflicts of society has smoothed away all energies, and made them reject the inconvenience of all individual opinions, from the obvious perception of the impediments encountered by going against the stream, and of the facility of accompanying its course. They

*Pursue the triumph; and partake the gale:»*

their object is to flatter the public taste, that

they may participate of its favour; and themselves be carried forward by those labours of others, which they find to be agreeable to the public palate: — not to oppose the current; and endeavour to create a taste of their own, which, even if just, would require a long time to force itself in defiance of passions, habits, and prejudices.

It is often urged as a proof of the rectitude of Periodical Criticism that its judgment is generally ratified by the public sanction. But this is to reverse the facts: the judgment comes from the public: and the sanction from the critics: if therefore it proves any thing, it proves the rectitude of the *public* judgment: but I take the two to be one; and only parts of the same opinion. If they ever differ, — (as by chance they sometimes do,) — the Public is sure to prevail: for it will be found that Criticism is unable by any puff, or any sincere praise, to lift into favour a work contrary to the public feeling, or to depress any with which the Public is inclined to be pleased.

Critics know this; and their employers know this; and, as it is one main purpose of these Works to help forward the trade of vendors of new books they finding it to be beyond their power to render saleable what the Public, (resolved to be directed by its own taste,) is un-

willing to buy, do their utmost to help forward that sort of inclination which already exists; and to push forward the market in the course in which it is willing to go. (1)

## CHAPTER CXXXI.

*Objection to a particular position of Wordsworth regarding the purpose of poetry.*

9 Dec. 1823.

I have repeatedly delivered my opinion of the nature of Poetry, both in the present volume and in the *Anti-Critic*, to this effect,—that its business is, *not to give a portrait of reality; — but to represent the impressions made upon the fancy, and the creations formed by new combinations of those impressions, together with the sentiments and passions produced by such impressions and creations.*

It does not seem to me that I differ from what is contained in *Wordsworth's Prefaces* as to any essential position regarding Poetry ex-

(1) There are certain Reviews, that, besides these, have important collateral objects, which they endeavour to promote by a large intermixture of original discussion. In *this* respect, they require a different examination, which does not belong to the present Chapter.

cept this. I infer from the construction I put on *page* 303 of his *fourth* volume, that the nearer poetry in its representations *resembles the passions produced by real events*, the more perfect he considers it. I say that I *infer*, because the *but* of this position is to justify the « *language uttered by man in real life:* » — but it seems to me that in other parts the ingenious and profound critic lays down doctrines which exactly agree with my own. In *vol.* 3. *p.* 300, he says: « *The appropriate business of poetry is, to treat of things not as they are, but as they appear; not as they exist in themselves, but as they SEEM to exist to the senses and the passions.* »

I must not transcribe the numerous beautifully expressed passages from the same work, by which I could fortify my own opinions on Poetry, because it would be to transcribe more than half the *Prefaces*. (1)



(1) Many years had elapsed since I had read these Prefaces — (of course in the original editions, —) when the last Edition was brought me from England, in *August* 1823, after the greater part of this volume was printed.

## CHAPTER CXXXII.

*Resolution and firmness necessary to render Genius effective.*

9 Dec. 1823.

There is a quality, which Genius often wants; but without which it will with difficulty, and rarely, (if it ever can,) rise to its height. This is resolution and firmness. Wordsworth says with the most affecting magnificence, that «*there are select Spirits for whom it is ordained that their fame shall be in the world an existence like that of Virtue, which owes its being to the struggles it makes, and its vigour to the enemies it provokes; — a vivacious quality, ever doomed to meet with opposition; and still triumphing over it.*» (1)

Wordsworth himself has exhibited this *vivacious quality*; — this resolution and firmness; — and he will be rewarded for it. (2)

(1) Vol. III. p. 308.

(2) See the passage in his *Preface* affixed to vol. I. p. xxxiii. beginning, «*if bearing in mind,*» etc. — «*yet justified by a recollection of the insults which the ignorant, the incapable, and the presumptuous have heaped upon these and my other writings, I may be permitted to anticipate the judgment of posterity upon myself,*» etc. — See also Milton's Latin *Ode to Rous*, 1646, where he speaks of *requiem perfunctam invidia*; — of *lingua procaz vulgi*; — of *cordatior ætas*; of *sana posteritas*, etc.



He, who is driven from his hold by the objections, the insults, or the neglects of his cotemporaries, can never do great things. Wordsworth says, that *«every author as far as he is great or original, has had the task of creating the taste by which he is to be enjoyed.* (1)

The Multitude are courageous by strength of numbers; *dant animos socii*: but Genius ought to be courageous by force of mind. It ought to examine well before it takes its stand; — but having taken it, it ought not to be moved again by clamour, or artifice, or raillery, or misrepresentation, or calumny, or scorn, or insult. It should be proof against the attacks not merely of the stupid, — but of that which the world calls brilliant talent; — the art of knowing mankind practically in all their faculties, passions, habits, and purposes; and conforming to them, and flattering them in their errors, with the view of ruling them, and leading them to their own ends! — It is *this* sort of *talent*, which is the effective enemy of Genius: — not stupidity, or ignorance: for these last are too feeble and contemptible to do any essential injury. Whatever is spiritual, whatever cannot be brought to the test of the Senses, is always open to the degrading jests, insolent wit, and

1) Vol. III. p. 330.



irreverent influence of those subordinate abilities which are adapted to govern the intellects of the great mass of Human Beings. Ridicule, whether just or unjust, is a weapon, by which few are invulnerable. He, who supplies food to the passions of envy and malice, is sure to find hearers and applauders.

If the real principles of poetry have a fixed and definite basis in the constitution of human nature, (1) [as it seems to me undeniable that they have,] then false criticism may be answered, and false ridicule exposed. But to detect unfounded assumptions, to lay bare distorted reasonings, and to unravel the wilful mixture of inconsistent principles, requires a steadiness of nerve, a calm self-possession, which the irritation of attack seldom permits to a sufferer; while the defence so made, the mob who enjoyed the attack, are too impatient to peruse, and too dull to comprehend.

It is pity, that men who have spent their whole lives in the coarse bustle of business and practical affairs, will attempt to interfere with the higher departments of literature. Their bent is always in favour of works in the walk of acute and accurate observation; delivered with that point and wit, which is most calcu-

(1) See Wordsworth, III, 315.

lated to make impression « *amid the busy hum of men.* » — but as they cannot quite overcome the force of the universally - admitted principle, that the distinction of genius is *imagination*, they sometimes look out for the productions of this faculty as subjects for their admiration and praise: — and when they do this, they almost uniformly mistake extravagance for merit; and violations of all probability for creative power. There is, in short, something so contradictory and inexplicable in their system, (if it can be called *system*,) that sensitive and morbid Genius gives up all emulation and effort in despair. Meanwhile the meteors they have lifted up, have risen, only to fall of themselves: — but from their ashes, fanned by the same processes, rise and fall others in unbroken succession.

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### CHAPTER CXXXIII.

*Fame is empty: but the intrinsic pleasure of the legitimate occupations by which it is gained, is solid and durable.*

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*« A gentle, genial courtesy of mind,  
To those who were, or passed for meritorious,  
Just to console sad glory for being glorious;  
Which is in all respects save now and then,*

*A dull and desolate appendix. Gaze  
 Upon the shades of those distinguishd men  
 Who were or are the puppet-shows of praise,  
 The praise of persecution. Gaze again  
 On the most favour'd; and amidst the blaze  
 Of sun-set halos o'er the laurel-brow,  
 What can ye recognize? a gilded cloud!*

LORD BYRON.

Geneva, 29 Dec. 1823.

I do not exactly comprehend how it is, that if educated persons *have* thoughts and reflections, these thoughts and reflections do not come out upon paper. The quiet of the closet, and the self-possession of solitude, seem most fitted to bring them *out*. Yet how many who are sufficiently copious in conversation, are attacked by a *torpedo* of intellect, whenever they put their hands upon the pen. — It would seem by this, as if the generality can exercise a judgment on things *presented* to them, when they are unable *by themselves* to present the *materials* on which the judgment may *operate*.

Nice opinions on the incidents, propensities and fates of human life; animated natural and just sentiments; strong picturesque and glowing representations of absent or created images; — these are not to be expected but from minds highly gifted: — but something much short

of these may yet have interest and convey information.

Many go thro' life, perhaps, without deriving any intelligence from experience; or extracting any rule of direction for similar cases. A hap-hazard decision is made upon events as often as they arise, without any endeavour at comparison or distinction: nothing is learned for the future; so that each event stands insulated; and of no value but for itself.

But even if bare facts be related clearly and accurately, and with a good selection of circumstances, though unaccompanied by reasoning or observation, they may convey to the reader something useful to be known; some materials for himself to work upon.

Theorists are accused of a want of practical skill. It might as well be objected to the knowledge of a well-instructed and judicious farmer, that he has not an arm as strong and as practised in filling the dung-cart as one of his labourers!

It may be said, that there is no virtue in the possession of that, which is a natural gift. — But there is virtue in nourishing it; and ripening it into fruit. Natural gifts will not advance far, without the aid of cultivation.

It happens but to few, to be capacitated to extend their influence beyond the sphere of

their personal or material intercourse: — and to still fewer, that that influence should last beyond their own lives! —

He, who loves truth for truth's sake; who seeks knowledge for its own account, without any reference to the gratification of selfish interests or vanities, or of momentary curiosity; is of a very different order of Beings from those, whose only purpose is some personal advantage, or pleasure, arising out of what gives occasion to employ themselves in searching for information.

Innumerable are those, who can learn that which they cannot discover: and among these are many even of such as love truth and knowledge intrinsically. He therefore who is born with the ability of discovery, is responsible in duty and conscience for the waste of that ability.

Probably it may be remarked, that he who can do most, can do but little: and that if fame be what he acquires, that fame is a bubble, not worth having! — I am afraid, that it is so: — fame, I fear, is empty; and confers no solid good! — When our bones are mouldering in the earth, no *«flattery can soothe the dull cold ear of death!»* —

But whether it leads to fame, or does not lead to fame; — whether the fame be worth having, or not worth having; he on whom nature



has bestowed the faculty of original thinking, and original composition, will not, I presume, be happy without exercising the faculty so bestowed.

Envy, Malice, and Love of Detraction, however, take great advantage of this, — that men of literature and authors are sometimes found to be very foolish persons. Undoubtedly it is easy to read much, and by the aid of a quick and retentive memory to acquire much, without the addition of any of the better faculties of the mind; and it is easy to write books which convey such acquirements, by the same single and inferior power. But what is so acquired and conveyed, will contain nothing original; nothing solid; nothing discriminative; will be wanting even in the novelty of illustration; will have no force or freshness; and will confuse, instead of instructing, the reader, by its injudicious jumble and misapplication of discordant materials.

But to be a powerful and sound author, requires all the highest faculties of the mind.

Men cannot discriminate with novelty and profundity, arrive at grand conclusions, and express them with adequate clearness and strength, unless they are endowed with superiority of intellect.

Fancy, Sentiment, Reasoning, Memory, and



even Imagination, are necessary for all the higher orders of composition ; including history , which would seem least to require the last faculty. We must have combinations of events strongly presented to the mental eye , before we can accurately discriminate their forms and colours; and imagine the passions of human Beings in conflict , before we can penetrate into motives of action!

## CHAPTER CXXXIV.

*On the difference between Classical Poetry, and Romantic Poetry, exemplified in Horace's Epode, « Beatus ille, » and Milton's « Il Penseroso. »*

23 Oct. 1818.

MADAME DE STAEL, in her beautiful work *De L'Allemagne*, has well described the distinct traits of Classical and Romantic Poetry. Observe the different images and sentiments of HORACE and MILTON, where each is delineating the charms of rural solitude. The images of Horace are all beautiful and natural ; and expressed with exquisite accuracy, clearness, grace, and felicity: but they are gentle and pleasing rather than bold: they are not heighthened by the hues of fancy: they have no grandeur, no wildness,

no depth of colouring; and they are accompanied by no sentiments but such as a common mind would feel. Indeed I should say that the poem is purely descriptive, leaving the sentiments to arise in the reader's bosom from the images presented. At the same time it must be observed, that we have in English a justly-favourite poem, in which several of the most touching pictures are so nearly identical with passages in this Epode of Horace, that though I cannot believe that they were borrowed, it shews how the two excellent bards drew, at the distance of two thousand years, from the same fountain of Nature. Every one recollects in GRAY'S *Elegy* the lines which correspond with the

*puḍica mulier, ( quæ ) in partem juvat  
Domum, atque dulces liberos,*

et

*Sacrum vetustis extruit lignis focum  
Lassi sub adventum viri.*

And again,

——— *ut juvat pastos oves*

*Videre properantes domum!*

*Videre fessos vomerem inversum boves*

*Collo trahentes languido!*

And again in GRAY'S *Ode to Spring* the stanza which corresponds with

*Libet jacere modo sub antiquâ ilice:  
 Modo in tenaci gramine:  
 Labuntur altis interim ripis aquæ:  
 Queruntur in sylvis aves,  
 Fontesque lymphis obstrepunt manantibus,  
 Somnos quod invitet leves!*

But what are the circumstances that attend MILTON'S solitude: and how is *his* mind employed? He reads

*Tales of knights and Barons bold:*

he sees *solemn Tournaments*: beholds Beauty presenting the reward of Valour; and hears aërial music above and around him.

This difference arises both from the disparity in the native characters of the minds of these poets; and from the change produced by time and country in the manners, habits, religion, and superstitions. Whatever nourishes grandeur of forms, or sublimity of thought; whatever keeps in agitation the bolder passions, produces the fittest materials and fittest age for poetry. The age of reason and philosophy, of severe understanding and sound common sense, is not the age of poetry.

MILTON'S mind was enriched with all the splendid extravagances of the Gothic ages. What-

ever was lofty ; whatever was wild ; whatever was full of terror or darkness , accorded with the sombre hues of his imagination , and the energy of his mighty faculties. He preferred therefore the blackness of night ; the war of the elements ; the hour *when spirits are abroad* ; to the smiling landscape enlivened by the sun ; the hum of bees ; the soft songs of birds ; and the ripple of gentle streams.

The store of imposing incidents which the credulous annals of the dark ages afforded ; the peculiar and striking features of the Gothic mythology ; the endless train of superstitions which the corrupt ingenuity of the Popish priesthood had encouraged ; above all , the sublimity of a pure and spiritual Religion , filled a genius, naturally of the most expansive and exuberant powers , with a grandeur of materials unknown to the Ancients.

It is the business of Poetry to be conversant with all the most evanescent movements of the Soul ; to embody them in language ;

——— *to give to airy nothing*  
*A local habitation and a name.*

The mere description therefore of the material world , which is scarcely going beyond the *painter* , is but a narrow exercise of the

*poet's* talents. To perpetuate the beautiful or affecting trains of ideas which external objects raise in the fertile mind, is a primary duty of this Art. It is its power to unite the material with the immaterial world, which is its highest praise.

Perhaps even MILTON has not in the *Il Penseroso* intermixed sentiment, and associated his ideal imagery, as copiously as he might. But his figures are so selected, as to awaken profound and melancholy contemplation; and his epithets, picturesque and solemn, have all the same tendency.

MILTON's habits of life, as well as his native propensities, were more fitted to these visionary creations of the mind, than those of HORACE. He passed his time in solitude; and in unremitting study of all the extensive erudition of past and present ages; — in the neighbourhood of a luxurious and crowded Court, rendered odious to him not merely by its vices, but by the neglect with which his indignant genius was treated. — HORACE, on the other hand, was a favoured Courtier; was a man of the world; and would have learned in society to suppress the wild flights of an erratic imagination, if Nature had implanted them in him.





## CHAPTER CXXXV.

## CONCLUSION.

19 Feb. 1824.

The Reader has here an unstudied Collection of my DETACHED THOUGHTS. What they are worth, it would be idle in me to attempt to prejudge. I am aware of frequent *repetitions*; but I trust that the apology made by *L'Abbé Trublet* for such repetitions, (\*) in such a work as this, has sufficient force in it to protect me from all rational censure on this account.

As to impertinent and hard-hearted censure, I have lived too many years and incurred too many acts of injustice and disappointment, to be much and long affected by it. I know that all success in this world is secured by charlatanism, intrigue, and corruption. I know that he, who will not condescend to manœuvre, and work crookedly and underhand, has as much chance of gratifying an honest ambition in the paths of public life, (\*\*) as he, who plays with integrity and honour, has of winning a game against professed gamblers who use *loaded dice*! — I know that it is exactly the same in Literature, as it is in the more active walks of

(\*) See my Prefatory Letter.

(\*\*) There are exceptions to almost every position: but the exceptions to this are very rare.

Political and Professional ambition! I know the means by which popular favour is to be won: but I would sooner be a *driveller* than use them!

For forty years I have gone my own way; never seduced from that which the native impressions of my heart told me to be the true; — neglected, traduced, and chilled, no doubt, and rendered gloomy, by the neglect; but never yet allowing the clouds and rigid coldness that enveloped me, entirely

« *To freeze the genial current of my soul!* »

I speak not of civil rights: this volume is not the place for such discussions: I speak not of the *fool's hope* of the security of laws in certain cases against particular classes of political power: I speak not of the rottenness and impotence of constitutional principles, perpetually-repeated statutes, and solemnly argued decisions of the most illustrious Judges, against the passions, the interests, or the caprices which may so happen to spring up: — all these are reserved for their due channel and opportunity. I allude to parties, factions, and combinations, (perhaps I may be justified in saying *conspiracies*,) of another kind.

But if a man loves fame, and praise, let him not trust to *merit*; — even admitting him

to be sure that he is not mistaken in his own *self-estimate*! And what other person will believe that he is not mistaken, when the Public is not with him! He may have friends that wish him well: — but what will that avail, if they have not sufficient strength of mind to form their own opinions; or sufficient taste or judgment, even where they have the courage, to think rightly?

The few, who think for themselves, and think rightly, are not those who make the most noise, and dictate to others with the most activity and importunity. The *still small voice* of reason and taste is perhaps heard at last: but it is long before it is heard!

Yet we cannot keep our full thoughts pent up in our bosoms: — if they have no vent, they will breed diseases, and settle into impenetrable clouds. Without expectation of fame or praise, therefore, he who has habituated his mind to constant exercise may find an adequate gratification in committing his thoughts to paper and to print. For who will write unless with the hope of bringing the fruits of his mind to the test of at least some other judgments, however few and select? To what is to remain closed up and hid from all eyes in the writer's *Common-Place-Book*, he has no excitement to give a moment of painful labour,

or spare a moment which can be more pleasantly spent. There exists not the person who even in despair would not wish to leave a pleasing *memorial* of himself *in some kind* and partial *bosom*. And thus it is that I return to the point whence I commenced my course in the first chapter of this volume. My circle them is completed: and here I am called on to end.

« *To morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.* »

While my faculties remain, the subjects of moral discussion which interest my curiosity will never be exhausted.

E N D.

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# A CATALOGUE (\*)

## OF ALL THE WORKS

PRINTED AT THE PRIVATE PRESS AT LEE PRIORY

IN KENT :

FROM ITS COMMENCEMENT IN JULY 1813, TILL ITS  
TERMINATION IN JAN. 1823.

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N. B. Unless where otherwise noticed, the Works printed at the Lee Priory Press, and which are now *finally discontinued*, were strictly and uniformly limited to 100 Copies.

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### IN ROYAL QUARTO.

- 1. *Speeches delivered to Queen Elizabeth, at Sudeley Castle, the seat of Giles Brydges, Lord Chandos.*
- 2. *Sir Walter Raleigh's Poems.*
- 3. *Greene's Groats-worth of Wit; bought with a Million of Repentance.* Of this Work only 65 Copies were printed.
- 4. *William Browne's Occasional Poems*, never before printed. In 4 Parts.
- 5. *Select Poems, by Sir Egerton Brydges.*
- 6. *Occasional Poems: by the Same Author.*
- 7. *Nicholas Breton's Longing of a Blessed Heart.*

(\*) Copied from the Advertisement of John Warwick, the late Printer of the Lee Priory Press, with a few verbal additions.

- 8. *N. Breton's Melancholike Humours.*
  - 9. *Sonnets from Petrarch: by the Rev.<sup>d</sup> Fr. Wrangham.*
  - 10. *Dunluce Castle, a Poem: by Edward Quillinan, Esq.*
  - 11. *Stanzas: by the Same Author.*
- 

IN ROYAL OCTAVO.

- 12. *Francis Davison's Poetical Rhapsody: (a new Edition.)* In 4 Parts.
  - 13. *The Sylvan Wanderer: by Sir Egerton Brydges.* In 4 Parts.
  - 14. *Excerpta Tudoriana: (a Selection of Elizabethan Poetry.)* In 7 Parts.
  - 15. *Michael Drayton's Nymphidia, the Court of Fairy: (a new Edition.)*
  - 16. *Life of Sir Philip Sydney: by Fulke Grevile, Lord Brook.* In 2 Vols.
  - 17. *Life of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle: written by Herself.*
  - 18. *Poems of Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle: 25 Copies printed as a specimen of the Lee Priory Press, and the first Work printed there: (not sold.)*
  - 19. *The Characters of Robert Devereux Earl of Essex, and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham: by Sir Henry Wotton.*
  - 20. *Bertram; a Poetical Tale, in Four Cantos: by Sir Egerton Brydges.*
  - 21. *List of the Pictures at Lee Priory.— 60 Copies printed.*
  - 22. *The Ravished Soul, and Blessed Weeper; by Nicholas Breton.*
-



## IN DEMY OCTAVO.

23. *Fame's Memorial: an Elegy upon the Earl of Devoushire: by John Ford. Edited by Mr. Haslewood.*
24. *Letters from the Continent: by Sir Egerton Brydges. In 2 Vols.*
25. *What are Riches? (a second Edition.) by the Same Author. (The first Edition was printed at Geneva.)*
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## IN POST QUARTO.

26. *Hagthorpe Revived: or Select Specimens of a Forgotten Poet: edited by Sir Egerton Brydges.*
27. *Jack Jugler and Thersytes: edited by M.<sup>r</sup> Haslewood . . .*
28. *Select Funeral Memorials. In 2 Parts.*
29. *Cælia: consisting of Twenty Sonnets: by William Percy.*
30. *Elegiac Verses, addressed to Lady Brydges, by Edward Quillinan, Esq.*
31. *Woodcuts, and Verses by the same Author, illustrative of each Cut. In one Vol. This Volume embraces the whole of the Engravings used in the various Works of the Lee Press.*

## IN POST OCTAVO.

32. *Life and Death of Sir Francis Drake: by Charles Fitz-geffrey.*
33. *The Trumpet of Fame.*
34. *Life and Death of William Powlett, First Marquis of Winchester: by R. Broughton.*

- 35. *The Brother-in-Law; a Comedy: by the Rev. Henry Card.*
- 36. *Nicholas Breton's Praise of Virtuous Ladies.*
- 37. *Richard Braithwayte's Select Odes.*
- 38. *Desultoria: by Sir Egerton Brydges.*
- 39. *George Wither's Select Lyrical Poems.*

N.B. N.<sup>o</sup> 24. *Letters from the Continent*, and N.<sup>o</sup> 25 *What are Riches*, (the two last Works printed,) may be had of R.<sup>t</sup> Triphook, Old Bond Street. A few copies of some of the other Works, and Parts that remain, may be had of the Printer, JOHN WARWICK, who has now established a Press at N.<sup>o</sup> 40, Brooke Street, Holborn, London: — or of Mr. Triphook, or Mess.<sup>rs</sup> Longman.

The Engravings on Wood used in the Lee Priory Works, are deposited at the Mansion of Lee Priory, in Kent; according to the pledge given concerning them; and will never be permitted to be used again.

LONDON, Printed by JOHN WARWICK, 40, Brooke Street, Holborn. *March*, 1823.

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GENEVA, Reprinted by WILLIAM FICK,

10.<sup>th</sup> *March*, 1824.

## ADDITIONS

## TO THE ABOVE ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**O the above Advertisement of JOHN WARWICK, the Lee-Priory-Printer, it may be desirable to add a few notices. Of the foregoing publications which were the property of the PRINTER, and done for *his exclusive benefit* and at *his cost and risk*, nothing was engaged for by Sir E. Brydges but the GRATUITOUS labour (\*) of the Editorship, or of the compositions of his own pen. The owner of the Mansion, (the Editor's son,) gave the use of the rooms where the Press was erected.

The only benefit to which the Editor looked, *beyond* that of the PRINTER, was a benefit to Literature, resulting from the reprint of several Tracts at once scarce and curious, which had been for one or two Centuries buried treasures.

There is nothing to which the captiousness of malice, envy, ill-will, and prejudice will not find objections: and it may perhaps be pretended, that these Tracts were not *worth* reprinting: that they were only interesting to *Bibliomaniacs*; and useless to solid literature. How little ground there is for such an objection, the *titles* of some of these Reprints, (if not of all,) will easily shew to every Englishman of any education. Mere base ignorance alone can deem *Lord Brook's LIFE OF SIR*

(\*) Though pecuniary assistance was refused to be engaged for, much gratuitous pecuniary assistance was *given*.

PHILIPP SYDNEY an uninstructional or unaffectioning trifle: yet the only previous Edition of it was rarely to be met with. He, who does not feel interest in the POEMS of that illustrious Man SIR WALTER RALEIGH, which were never before collected, must be strangely deficient in the qualities both of the heart and the head! The OCCASIONAL POEMS OF WILLIAM BROWNE, the Pastoral poet, now given from the Lee Priory Press, had hitherto remained in MS. and were entirely unknown: they are, in the Editor's opinion much superior to those productions on which his fame had been built; because they are much less affected. The RHAPSODY collected by FRANCIS DAVISON, the son of that unfortunate Secretary to Queen Elizabeth, whose name is so deeply connected with the fate of Mary Queen of Scots, is as interesting in its matter, as the former Editions of it are rare. The Autographical MEMOIR OF MARGARET DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE, extracted from one of her scarcest works, is a piece of biography of exquisite curiosity. All the pieces of NICHOLAS BRETON are as beautiful as they were hitherto unattainable. CHARLES FITZGEEFFREY'S *Sir Francis Drake* is not merely very uncommon, but a very laboured and valuable production; more studied and quaint than full of fire and genius; but still the production of superior endowments; and a specimen of the literature of the Age, far from insignificant.

It is not necessary to say more here. The Reprints already noticed are sufficient to indicate the tone of literature, which characterizes the Works of the Lee Priory Press.

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## A CATALOGUE OF OTHER WORKS

WRITTEN, OR EDITED, BY SIR EGERTON BRYDGES,

BAR.<sup>r</sup>, B. C. de S. etc. etc.

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